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CAPTAIN  
FANNY



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# CAPTAIN FANNY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF  
"JOHN HOLDSWORTH, CHIEF MATE,"  
ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.  
VOL. III.



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# CAPTAIN FANNY.

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## CHAPTER I.

### FANNY DISTINGUISHES HERSELF.

**W**HEN Mrs. Rogers has anything on her mind she is on the whole rather less cheerful society than a skeleton would be, if a skeleton could come into a room and sit down and look at you. Fanny never said a truer thing in her life than what she told Jack—that her mamma's face could grow very hard at times. When Mrs. Rogers comes downstairs again, having kept lunch waiting twenty minutes to

mark her feelings, she brings into the presence of her daughter and her niece a face so full of gloom, a manner so austere and chilling, that a dispassionate spectator would be at a loss to know whether to assign her melancholy exterior to the death of some greatly beloved object or to the more awful and unforgettable loss of money. Of course this capacity of being easily afflicted and uncontrollably upset is a sign of a weak nature ; but then what is called strength of mind has a good deal to do with habit. A person reared in a nation of earthquakes will preserve an immovable nervous system under convulsions which would make the wretch unused to such upheavals shriek aloud ; and looking at the thing from the other side of it, it is easy to understand that Mrs. Rogers, whose life is about as placid and uneventful as that of a caged bird's, should consider Fan's secret engagement to Mr. Huntley as a very tremendous event.

They are as dumb as mutes at the beginning of lunch. Fan's eyes are hard with stubbornness; Ethel is sympathetic and mouse-like in face and movement; Mrs. Rogers looks as if the coffin were in the next room, and she is only waiting for the undertaker's men to come and carry it away.

What is to be talked about on such an occasion? They know very well what is in each other's mind, and that the first word spoken will lead to arguments and tears. Even Ethel, whose sharp instincts advise her to smile and behave as though it were her duty to be cheerful, is suppressed by Fan's resolute face and auntie's stony manner, and makes a good lunch with a Mariana-in-the-moated-grange-like air, as if she is aweary, aweary!

Pshaw! the velvet-faced little hypocrite! her thoughts are with Jack, and whilst her mournful beautiful eyes wistfully dwell on Fan's face, her heart is bounding to think

that her handsome scornful cousin there, who has had Jack's kisses and taken his love away, is going to be balked by difficulties which are pretty sure to tire or disgust one or the other of them, and end the engagement. What passion but is surpassed by jealousy in its power to make us odious and wicked? Is it a negro smothering his lady with a bolster, or a pearly-faced girl gloating with a commiserating face over her cousin's troubles? The dreadful gnawing passion makes a brotherhood of all disappointed wretches, and one can scarce imagine a sin it is not violent enough to prompt.

Mamma is just about to leave the table, to go back to her sewing-machine, the treadle of which promises a kind of soothing outlet to the mortification and anxiety that work in her, when Ethel says in a low stage whisper, with her eyes on the window :

"Here's Mr. Huntley."

Fan turns hastily, and the knocker outside thunders.

"It's Mr. Huntley," exclaims Fanny, standing up and looking at her mamma.

"We are out to him, if you please," answers Mrs. Rogers smartly. "Ethel, tell——"

"I shall receive him," interrupts Fan angrily. "We are not out. The poor fellow has come to tell us about his father's letter, and meet you like an honourable gentleman. You are bound to see him."

Mrs. Rogers casts herself in a weeping way behind her sewing-machine, and cries out :

"I am not bound to see him, and I command you not to see him either. Ethel, make haste, and tell——"

But here again she is interrupted ; this time by Charlotte, who throws open the door, and says :

"Mr. Huntley, mum," and puts his card into Mrs. Rogers's hand, who lets it drop on the ground.

Fan walks straight into the drawing-room.

Jack has hardly had time to sit down. She gives him no greeting, but takes the hand he holds out, and says :

"Jack, your father is a dreadful old man. He has written a most abominable letter to mamma. She feels herself so grossly insulted that she refuses to be in to you ; and I am sure the most wretched trouble is coming upon us, all through your father daring to write as though he were addressing a servant."

Jack's face takes a rather savage expression.

"I had better go, hadn't I?" he says.  
"I suppose I ought to have some little pride left in me in spite of my father, and I can't stop in a house from which the

lady of it would like to see me kicked out."

"Oh, Jack!" cries Fan, with a gush of tenderness, fondling his hand. "What a pity it is that you didn't speak to mamma before you wrote to your father. She couldn't have had a reason then for so *violently* opposing us, and you could have seen your father afterwards, and that would have prevented him from writing."

"I acted for the best, as I hoped," he answers, biting his mustache furiously. The situation is a confoundedly unpleasant one, and self, for the moment, is so dominant, that his answer is almost unloving. "I came to have a talk with Mrs. Rogers," he goes on. "My well-bred governor has sent me a letter rather more scarifying, and not a whit more genteel, I'll venture to say, than his letter to your mother; and I meant to show it to her, and ask her to be our friend, and give me leave to call upon



you here until I had done what I could with my father. But I didn't think he'd write to Mrs. Rogers. What did he say?"

"It was an unmannerly letter—but do not mind it, dear. It's not your fault, Jack;" and she looks at him with tender shining eyes.

The door is pushed open, and Mrs. Rogers steps in.

She fumed about the room, when Fan walked out, and asked Ethel, "Ought she to allow that young man to be alone with her daughter? Wasn't it *great* presumption on his part to call?" and Ethel's answers induced her presently to gather up her skirt and dash away into the drawing-room, which she now enters, and makes a stiff bow in the direction of Mr. Huntley, and drops into a chair.

She has the true British matronly spirit in her with all her meekness and good-

nature. The rich man has proposed, and been rejected for the young fellow yonder, with a trifle of pocket-money a year to live on, and her feelings are in her face, and her eyes look coldly and palely out of their sockets, and the mixed expression of indignation and embarrassment, kneaded into hardness by a very hot-headed resolution, paints the story of what is going forward so graphically, that you could read all that is happening without hearing a word spoken.

One would rather stand a trial at the Old Bailey, I think, than confront such a face as Mrs. Rogers's under the conditions which are imposed on Jack.

She gives a ghastly grin of politeness when she sits down; but the spasm of breeding goes out of her face with horrid abruptness, and there is a dead silence.

"I am sorry, Mrs. Rogers," Jack begins, "that my father should have taken the

liberty of addressing an offensive letter to you."

"A most offensive letter," she answers, catching up his words with a cold eagerness.

"Mr. Huntley is not answerable for it, and you don't therefore expect him to apologise for his father, mamma," Fanny says proudly.

"I have not asked him to apologise. Fanny, be good enough to speak more politely to your mother, if you please," Mrs. Rogers cries out, and flushes up as she directs an emphatic nod at her daughter.

"I have gathered from Miss Rogers," says Jack, "that my presence in your house is distasteful to you. I assure you I have no wish nor intention to intrude. I merely ask your permission to offer an explanation before I go away."

"I hope you won't make any explanations under the impression that I want

them," says Mrs. Rogers. "I shall be sorry to cause you pain; but I beg to say that I utterly refuse to sanction the engagement that *secretly* exists between you and my daughter;" and she fixes a stubborn eye on the young fellow, and defies him with her wooden face.

"It was my fault," exclaims Jack in a subdued voice, "that the engagement was kept secret from you."

"Mamma," says Fanny, clasping her hands tightly in order to steady her voice, "this sort of treatment won't help your wishes. I am not a child to be dictated to in an off-hand manner. Why do you refuse to sanction our engagement?"

"Because I don't choose to do so, that's why!" shrieks out Mrs. Rogers, enraged by Fanny's disdainful tone in the presence of Jack, who himself eyes her haughtily enough. "And let me tell you, Fanny, that these airs are very offensive, and I

won't endure them. A pretty thing indeed for a child to fly at her mother in this way ! I suppose I know what I'm about better than you, and your impertinence shan't force me to confess my real motives for stopping the wicked folly you have been guilty of behind my back. And if Mr. Huntley is a gentleman, he will leave you alone, and go away, and show himself a right-minded man !"

Which said she bursts into tears.

"It's rather too soon to begin to cry," says Fanny, with angry contempt. "I have acted an underhand part in not speaking out before, and you can reproach me as bitterly as you like for that, and I'll not say a word ; but I mean to be more brave for the future."

"You daren't !" cried out Mrs. Rogers. "I declare you shall do as I order you ! I declare you shall—so there !"

"What are your wishes ?" asks Jack,

fumbling with his hat. He has not been asked to sit down, and stands near Fanny, making short movements, as though he were always on the point of walking away, and always thinking better of it.

"Most *certainly* that this engagement be ended," answers Mrs. Rogers, choking over her words.

"How is it to be done?" he inquires.

"Oh, you know the way—you can do it if you choose," Mrs. Rogers answers in a wild sarcastic way, waving her hand.

"But Fanny and I love each other, Mrs. Rogers, and that must convince you that you ask us to do an impossibility."

"Of course," mutters Fan, and she half turns her back upon her mother.

Mrs. Rogers, irritated beyond all bounds by Jack's contemptuous tone, is glad to be able to burst out upon her daughter, preferring to deal with her than with Jack, of

whom she is not perfectly sure that she is not rather afraid.

“You shall not defy me, Fanny. I declare solemnly that you shall never marry Mr. Huntley with my consent. I am not to be frightened by your sneers. It’s a mercy that your poor father was not spared to witness the dreadful treatment I am receiving from you. How dare you presume to be wiser than I? Year after year I am thinking about you (*sob*), and hoping and praying to see you happily settled in life before I die (*sob*), and when I think my prayers are going to be heard your wicked temper springs up, and you defy me and make me appear mean and contemptible before strangers (*sob*), and all because you have been seized by a foolish deplorable whim which you don’t understand yourself, and which Mr. Huntley there, who may sneer at me as much as he pleases, but I don’t care a fig for his sneers——”

"I was not sneering, Mrs. Rogers."

"Oh, you are quite at liberty to sneer if you choose," she says, changing with startling rapidity her sobbing miserable manner into one of icy and contemptuous politeness; "my daughter—my own flesh and blood—has shown you the way—and—and—"

Here her tears get the better of her once more; she gives vent to a great flood, starts up, throws down the chair she has been sitting on, and dashes weeping and groaning out of the room.

One longs to drop a curtain over scenes of this kind. Mrs. Rogers is not one of those dreadful mothers who are for marrying their daughters to wretched old Croesuses in spite of their screams. She is a British matron indeed, but not in the first ranks of that rustling, swelling, title-loving, young-man-hating regiment. She dislikes Mr. Huntley, and thinks Colonel



Swayne a charming man, and is passionately determined not to let Jack stand in the Colonel's light. She is honest enough and well-meaning, and little or nothing of what is sordid is mixed up in her violent prejudice to this engagement, and one can't but be sorry to see her casting herself out of the room in tears.

Fan remains behind glowing with temper and sentiment. Her proud fine eyes are on the floor, and she seems like one whose anger makes her struggle for words.

"She'll try to end this between us," says Jack savagely. "We are blessed with a nice father and mother. I don't know which of the two I'd rather have as a parent."

"I always told you that mamma would object; but I never thought she would act like this," Fan answers, with her bosom heaving.

"I have brought you into a pretty mess, Fanny."

"Not worse than what I have brought you into."

"I am at a disadvantage," he says. "How is a man to deal with a woman? She insults me and bursts into tears, and flies out of the room; and who is to deal with an argument of that kind?"

"Oh, Jack, she hates you, and I don't know why. It's not because you haven't money. I never knew her to think of money."

"She hates me because you have accepted me and rejected the Colonel. But what on earth does it matter?"

"Nothing," she answers softly, "if we remain true to each other."

"Will that be difficult?" he asks.

(Here we turn our heads aside whilst he takes her hand and draws her to him, &c.)

"Now, darling, where shall we meet for

the future? Of course I can never enter this house again."

Whereupon they fall to whispering, and when presently he leaves the room, she goes with him to the hall door, with her hair tossed upon her forehead, and her cheeks red, and her eyes melting and shining, and stands watching him from the doorstep as he walks away, and sends a divine kiss after him with her white fingers when he looks around and waves his hand.<sup>7</sup>

Other eyes watch him too. They belong to Mrs. Rogers, and I promise you the expression in them is not very loving.

She stands at the parlour window, where she has been whimpering whilst she talks to Ethel, who is tremendously busy on the sofa over some embroidery.

"How *dare* he remain after I have as good as ordered him out of the house!" Mrs. Rogers has kept on crying. "Would you ever have believed, Ethel, that Fanny would

have defied me in this cruel way, and actually oblige me to hurry out of my *own* drawing-room to hide my feelings from Mr. Huntley's sneers?"

And Ethel, drooping her sweet face over the dainty embroidery — a collar quite worthy of the neck it is one day to adorn — makes no reply to the various passionate, fretful, or wailing inquiries Mrs. Rogers puts to her, but claps on a sad, sad look, and now and again heaves a little audible sigh.

"Now, mamma," says Fan, entering the room in an angry bustling manner, "Jack is gone and doesn't mean to enter the house again. I suppose you are satisfied."

"Fanny, remember whom you are speaking to, if you please," cries Mrs. Rogers, stately in her tears. And she commands her off with her hand and walks hastily across the room. "Mr. Huntley," she says, turning and executing a number of nods

as she speaks, "had *no* right to stop a minute in the drawing-room after I had left it. A *gentleman* would have gone away long before I had as good as ordered him to go, wouldn't a gentleman, Ethel?"

"We must be genteel ourselves before we can appreciate gentility in others," cries Fan with a furious shrug of the shoulders.

"Are you mad, child?" screams out Mrs. Rogers. "Do you want to make out that we're all vulgar? why, what's come over you?" And she stares at Fanny with a wild despairing eye.

Fan says nothing for some moments, but stands near the table looking steadily out of window. The flush that Jack's kisses left on her face has died out, but her hair has a wild look, and her eyes are feverishly bright, and tell of deep emotional excitement.

"What am I to do, mamma?" she says

suddenly and with an almost convulsive movement of the body. "I love Jack—must I give him up because he is poor and his father insults us?"

There is a half-suppressed passionate appealing tone in her voice, and the change of manner and almost of meaning frightens Mrs. Rogers, who is screwed up for the reception of scornful indignant sallies.

"Fanny, if you would only listen to reason! if you wouldn't be so headstrong! . . . Such scenes between mother and child are dreadful—you know I am your only friend . . ." And she tumbles down upon a chair and cries copiously.

"But why did you speak to him so rudely, mamma? What wrong has he done us? His father is an insolent man for daring to object to us because we are poor; but you object to Jack for the same reason, and the insult is the same in his case as in ours."

Ethel sits as busy as a bee over her embroidery; her head well-lowered, her fingers quick and cunning, her little mouth pursed up as though no other thought is in her but what concerns the stitches. Outside the garden is a rich green space with a deep blue sky shining over, and sweet smells float in through the open window, and the bird in its cage on the wall, hearing the voices within, sings sharply, and would seem to be having a quarrel on its own account with a thrush in the heavily-clad trees yonder.

"I am not conscious of having been rude to him," Mrs. Rogers answers with now and again a strong sob tripping up her words and catching hold of her breath; "I can't help showing my feelings, and people must take me as I am. Mr. Huntley has acted unpardonably in getting you to engage yourself to him and keep his offer from me; and what is more, Fanny," she cries, grow-

ing excited, "I have no opinion of that young man. I don't like the airs he gives himself: and I remember his conduct that night when Miss Matthews was here, when he sulked and hardly spoke, and I thought him very ill-bred. I *never* could endure the thoughts of his being your husband—and if you have one spark of love for me, you will tell me now—here, to my face—that you will not dream of—of—doing—of behaving—of—of doing *anything* without consulting me!"

The poor vehement lady has worked herself on to her legs, and stands imploring with her hands out.

"What would be the use of my consulting you? I could not express a wish that you wouldn't oppose," Fan answers with her hands tightly locked.

"Fanny! Fanny! bear with me! Be good, my child! make me this promise!" cries Mrs. Rogers, and she runs up to her



daughter and grasps her arm. It is a face dear to Fanny that looks at her, with tears running down its cheeks, and grief and love working in it. Good instincts in Fan's deep and composite nature rise to soften the pain in the mother ; she kisses the pale forehead hurriedly, and then turns away and hides her face in her hands, crying grievously. She is not one to cry often, and her tears are a real torture. Mrs. Rogers knows their significance, and with a rush of tenderness takes her child in her arms, and they sob in unison.

Ethel shows good taste at this juncture by leaving the room.

"Mammy, I love him—do not separate us," Fanny sobs with her face on her mother's shoulder.

"My darling child, have courage and be patient. I am sure you love him—but is he worthy of you ? What does he want to take from me ? My only child—my great

treasure. I must be sure that he is good and deserves you, before I can part with the only one God has left me to be my companion."

"But what *don't* you want me to do, mamma?" Fan says, breaking away from Mrs. Rogers, with her dark eyes shining with tears and looking adorable so, for they soften her bold, proud beauty, and melt down the roguish impertinence in her face into a fascinatingly tender and mournful expression.

The question is a chill upon the gush of the moment. Mamma drops her hands and answers—

"You must not meet Mr. Huntley in secret, Fanny."

"And he mayn't come to the house, and so I shan't be able to see him at all?" cries Fan with passionate interrogation in her voice.

Mrs. Rogers is greatly perplexed. She

is all eagerness to stop the engagement at once ; she is thinking of Colonel Swayne, and how the first report of this love-affair between Jack and her daughter will make him cry off. What is she to do ? What is a lone woman to do who has no friend to counsel her, and who is oppressed by such a hurrying whirl of emotions as makes her sometimes long for the relief of hysterics, and sometimes sets her craving for the privilege of using strong words.

“ Don’t ask me, Fanny, to teach you how to act !” she bursts out after a pause. “ You know what you owe yourself as a lady, and any secret communication with Mr. Huntley after what has happened will be so discreditable that I may count upon your honour in not descending to it.”

Saying which she hurries out of the room, gasping out a sob as she goes, and artfully flying, not to conceal her emotions, but to prevent herself from being upset,

confounded, and perhaps defeated by the volley of passionate questions which Fanny's face threatens.

"I *will* meet him !" Fanny says to herself with her angry eyes smarting with tears. "I'm old enough to know what's right, and I *will* meet him !" and she emphasises the *will* with such a stamp of the foot that the floor resounds under her, and cook in the kitchen wonders what on earth has fallen down now.

How blank things are to Fanny ! the rich, well-stocked old garden sloping in its fruitful beauty from the window, through which she is frowning and muttering, is no better than a desert in her opinion, a dull, tiresome waste that makes her ill to look upon. The canary's brilliant song in the sunshine is an impertinence and a nuisance, and her hand itches to let the bird fly out of its cage and take its noise to the distant trees.

Why, in heaven's name, isn't she per-

mitted to love Jack boldly and openly, to see him at the cottage, to be betrothed to him? His handsome face is in her memory, and such a touching tenderness comes upon her that her expression grows soft and beautiful with melancholy. It is that sordid old stockbroker, the rapacious old wretch who signs himself (faugh!) Samuel Huntley! who is at the bottom of all this mischief. She pictures him as an odious, snuffy, faded old rogue, and her bitter resentment is in some measure appeased by this quite womanly revenge. Yes! he must be odious and snuffy; and, as a stockbroker, he is bound to be a rogue, and she hates him well enough to bless heaven that he *is* a stockbroker. What would she give to have him in that chair, that she might broadside his aged sensibilities with the grape-shot of sarcasm and disgust in the round after round which her mind just now is capable of pouring out!

Jack hates him, and that's a comfort. She would think ill of Jack if he didn't hate him. How she would like to have Jack at her side to be able to say, "Dearest, mamma has no influence over me. I am your own pet, and nothing shall part us," and so forth.

The fond, passionate girl actually leans out of window to look at that part of the prospect where Jack lives ; and loves the peaceful sky for shining over him, and the garden-path there along which he has walked, and feels the want of a keepsake to kiss and fondle.

'Twas ever thus—not from childhood's hour, because maybe childhood's hour contains too much good, innocent, wholesome sense ; too much affection for cheaper and better toys than sweethearts—but from that later hour when the understanding takes a trip abroad, just as a smug citizen goes for his morning airing

and leaves nobody at home but the passions.

How little people think of what a good stock of serviceable feeling—feeling that would give them a fine relish for art and nature, and other healthy permanent delights—they waste in loving and making love.

Romeo spouting heroics over a garden wall to Juliet star-gazing in a balcony, is idly evaporating sentiment that properly husbanded might make him a delightful critic, say, and keep him all his life pleased with harmless things, which he will presently lose all relish for. We are spend-thrifts in romance, and are bankrupts in emotion too soon. Is it because Nature is niggardly in her gifts of sentiment? Depend upon it, we most of us start in life with a good capital, but we spend it all before we are old enough to know its value, and then look at us! old prosaic fogies with our

souls, like the Chinese, in our stomachs, our sensibilities in our gout and rheumatism, our affections in the funds, our atrocious old prejudices in favour of the real and the tangible, and the rest of things we can handle and invest in, and eat, and smoke, and sit upon.

Whilst Fanny stands loving the landscape for having Jack somewhere upon it, Ethel peeps in and takes up a position near the table, her hands folded, her soft, sad eyes fixed wistfully on Fan, who does not know she is in the room ; and somehow or other, the parlour with this consummate little actress in it becomes a stage,—Scene, an Interior—and one feels that one ought to look around for the audience, and sniff the aroma of gas and orange-peel on the air.

Fan has half her body out of window : so Ethel endeavours to make her presence known by a sigh, which, thanks to



the canary, isn't heard; then by a cough, which brings Fan in.

"Where's mamma?" she asks.

"In her bedroom, dear. I was *so* glad to see you kiss each other. These quarrels are wretched. Besides, auntie is not so likely to object now."

"Oh, yes she is," cries Fan angrily. "She won't hear of my meeting Jack out of doors, and she tells me to be patient, and good, and all that, and won't give me one word of hope. No! she won't say, 'If Jack can manage his father I will give my consent,' or, 'You may see each other,' or, 'I'll write to old Mr. Huntley, and see what I can do.' Not a word! I am to be patient! for what? I am to cut Jack and be good! . . . will I? Oh, what patience one wants!"

"Did she tell you to be patient after you and she had kissed?"

"Kissed! I couldn't help kissing her

when I saw her streaming face close to mine. She treated Jack *very* badly. I oughtn't to forgive her."

"She is your mamma, dear Fanny: you must bear with her," says this pretty little angel. "She wouldn't go on so about this engagement if she were not greatly disappointed by your rejecting Colonel Swayne. It's very hard upon you both, I am sure. But I've been thinking whilst out of the room that if you were to *seem* to act according to her wishes, she would be very grateful and feel sorry for you by-and-by, and finding Jack and you true to each other, would give her consent: and then a great deal of trouble would be saved. Of course when I say *seem*, I mean that you should go on loving Jack deeply, but not doing what she objects to."

"What! do you mean I ought not to meet him?" says Fan, with her imperious eyes on the sympathetic face.

"I wouldn't make a *rule* of meeting him every day. I wouldn't *thoroughly* defy auntie, and work her up and cause her to do something desperate," answers Ethel.

"Oh, I know how to behave to my mother, thanks," says Fan stiffly. And she adds quickly, "Has she sent you down to 'reason' with me?"

"No! I declare on my honour she hasn't," cries Ethel eagerly. "What I am saying is quite my own. I want to see you happy, and help you as much as I can—if I may—and that's why I would advise you, dear, *not* to provoke auntie too much, but to be patient, and meet Mr. Huntley cautiously, and not very often, so that auntie will really believe you are doing all you can to please her, in defiance of your own longings, and then she will see that her objections are unreasonable and harsh, and all will end well. That's what I mean, dear."

And the beautiful blue eyes, brimful of candour, and eagerness, and innocence, look meekly down, and her presumption in daring to give advice to the bold and handsome Fanny seems rebuked by her own sweet modesty.

Fan hasn't very much confidence in Ethel's sincerity ; but there is good sense in what she says, and just now Fan feels adrift, as it were, from the sympathies to which she is used to being moored, and can't but lay hold of the little hand which Ethel stretches out to her.

"I'd rather please mamma than make her miserable," she says gloomily. "It's wretched to quarrel and not speak : and that's what will happen for a long time, for we're both determined it seems, and it may take months to tire her out. But she mustn't prevent me from seeing Jack. I've promised to meet him again and again."

"But he won't expect you to meet him often—*very* often. I mean if he knows your motive for keeping quiet."

"Oh, he won't think my motive true, Ethel. He will fancy I am being influenced by mamma, and mean to give him up for Colonel Swayne." There is fine distress in her eyes and pathetic wistfulness in her face.

"If *I* were to meet him, I'd soon prove that you are as true as steel, and *make* him see that your pretended obedience to auntie is all for his sake and the love you have for him," Ethel says. "But perhaps I had better not interfere," she adds, naïvely.

"No, don't get into any scrape on my account, pray," Fan exclaims rather scornfully.

Ethel looks ill-used, and seats herself.

"I suppose what's true of one is true of most girls," Fan goes on bitterly. "One

can never be in love without being interfered with, and told that one is wrong. All mothers are the same. What sort of men please them? Not young men, unless they're rolling in wealth, and those sort of fellows don't marry. What's a girl's marriage got to do with her mother? *She's* not made uncomfortable by it if it doesn't turn out well. But it always *would* turn out well if mothers didn't interfere. They make their daughters marry people who are old or ugly, or something that's unpleasant, and that's the reason why so many husbands and wives are wretched."

It is hard to tell which is the most pleasantly comical: Fan's warm rhetoric or the lovely gravity with which Ethel listens to it and nods her approbation.

"Certainly, a girl ought to be allowed to choose for herself," says Ethel in a charming mutinous way. "If she has to live all her life with a person, it's proper and right that

she should have the privilege of selecting him for herself. I would, I know. I'd never allow any man to be forced upon me. I'd just say, NO—and if that wasn't accepted as an answer, I'd go to my bedroom and lock myself in, and defy them."

"Oh, Ethel, I hope you'll never be in my position! it's dreadful to dearly love a man, and be prevented from always being with him, or at all events, seeing him as often as you want," Fan exclaims with a great sigh. "You once wrote some verses about that," she adds, with a forlorn smile: "What were they, dear?"

"Do you mean those beginning,—  
*'Tis hard to be parted from those we  
adore'?*"

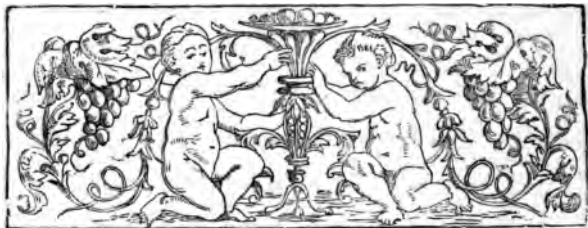
"No, the first line wasn't so long as that."

"Were they,—*'The sweet sad night  
comes slowly down'?*"

“Yes. I laughed at you when you read about an aching heart. But it’s true, Ethel. The heart *can* ache—like the head. It can, indeed. Mine does, I know.”

And she clasps her hand upon her beautiful breast, and shakes the troublesome hair off her forehead.





## CHAPTER II.

### ETHEL'S KINDNESS.

**T**HIS story is not so much designed to be the history of a young lady's love as the chronicle of certain incidents in it. I suppose a large bookcase would hardly contain the volumes that could be manufactured out of one love-story if the writer of it were to give full-length pictures of all the thoughts, tears, smiles, hopes, anxieties, kisses, quarrels, etc., which enter into, and, with scarce an exception, form the chief part of a delineation of that

passion without which no novel can in any sense be considered complete. For instance, a whole chapter might very easily be devoted to an account of Fanny's feelings and thoughts when she goes to her bedroom after passing a most uncomfortable day with mamma, and sits at the open window and reflects upon Jack, with her eyes on the stars. And remembering how very greatly love makes one suffer, what dreadful fits of depression it induces, what wild, feverish, passionate thoughts fly up into the head out of it, one can't feel sure that Fan's low spirits don't deserve a chapter to themselves, with a fine sprinkling of quotations from Alfred Tennyson, and all those other garnishings of eloquence and pathos which commend these accounts to the admiration of readers.

Mr. Titmarsh somewhere declares that love doesn't take away the appetite, and proves his assertion by a triumphant de-

scription of the immense meal he made after rushing away from the lady who had slightly rejected his offer. It is not impossible but that a large healthy man *could* sit down to a beefsteak and alternately eat it and read from the letter in which the mistress of his heart and his ambition scornfully informs him that he has quite mistaken her common acts of politeness. But women—perhaps not *all* of them, eh, Timon?—are composed of soft materials, which the passions very easily seize upon and eat into. Fan, with her hearty talk and bold, free style, is nothing but a woman under one of those disguises which girls will imitate from heroines in novels which they think clever. There is a great deal of human nature in her, and it is more penetrable to “circumstances” than that which is wrapped in much softer integuments.

Here, for instance, is the case: she loves

Jack and she loves her mother. She can't bear not to see Jack, but neither can she bear to make her mother miserable. Were you to meet her you would think, to hear her speak and remark her characteristic beauty, that she is a girl who would go to the deuce with the utmost coolness if she had a mind, who would give her love the reins—you might be sure it wouldn't want the whip—and dash off with it helter-skelter, and mamma might bawl herself hoarse, and get nothing in reply but bold, unsympathetic laughter.

Would Ethel behave so? You could not fancy it. So much meek loveliness, so much lady-like sweetness, is the soft, fragrant wrapper of a nature of delightful sensibility and tenderness and sympathy.

Fan has no deep cause for worry. She is quite sure that Jack loves her, but all the same she frets internally over the "situation," as one may call it,—over her

mother's obstinate attitude, and the feeble, puny prospects the future holds—as if she were as soft and mild in smiles and temper as Ethel, and never laughed loudly, nor used slang words nor an eye-glass in her life.

She loses her appetite. She finds it gone when she comes down to breakfast next morning, and she knows the reason. Jack is true—oh, yes, she is sure of that; but she has two masters to serve, two stools to sit upon, two bundles of hay to choose between. She must love him and her mamma too. She must be true to him and to mammy also. And how to manage it defies her tact, and makes her head ache, as it would yours and mine.

She has another cause of depression. She has thought over Ethel's advice about defying her mamma by a too resolute and audacious expression of her love, such as constantly going out to meet Jack would

involve, and has very nearly made up her mind to accept it. This is a hard concession to resolve upon. She alone knows how she loves that man, and what happiness, such as her heart has never before tasted, she has in being with him. But her nature is too large and generous to plan this course of action from the tricky motive Ethel suggested. She has almost determined to act thus, not to deceive her mother, but to please her, to keep her kind heart from fretting, to tranquillize her. There is a heroism in her thoughts, which she herself lays no stress on, but which would draw her mother closer to her were she to guess at the sacrifice her daughter is thinking about.

Yet that wouldn't satisfy Mrs. Rogers. She wants Fanny to give Jack up altogether—nothing short of that; and Fanny sees the wish in her face when they meet in the morning, and traces there the pre-

judice against Jack, which a good deal of querulous thinking last night has invigorated, and acidulated to an unreasonable extent.

It is a dull meal, that breakfast. Ethel keeps her bed, and mother and daughter are alone. Of course they talk, but the constraint upon them is strong, and they converse as strangers might. Fan leaves the table, having scarcely broken her fast, and goes to the window and stares out, with her hands locked behind her; then after a silence of some minutes, she turns impetuously :

“Mamma, I am not going to meet him. I know what is on your mind.”

“Thank you, Fanny, for saying so.”

The girl's full heart is in her eyes, and Mrs. Rogers waits to receive the threatened torrent, but Fan wrenches her feelings back and walks out of the parlour into the drawing-room, and flings herself into a

chair, and converts herself into the picture of a lonely, broken-down creature.

The whole day is before her: what shall she do to get through it? She can go out of course, but if she should meet Jack her mother would think she had broken her word, and since she has promised not to meet Jack (be sure she knows where to find him) she would as soon stop at home as walk aimlessly about the streets.

She grows restless and eager when she images Jack looking for her and not finding her. He would be on the sands, he told her, that morning, down near the old bathing-machine where they had that talk you may read about in a past chapter; and an intimation of this kind when, spoken by a lover, is as good as an appointment. He will misconstrue her absence, she thinks, when he finds she is not there. She ought to have remembered this before she spoke out in her impulse to her mother. She



sees him through her own troubles and fancies, and imagines he will be as miserable without her as she is without him, and sorrow for him comes out of her deep love. He is poor and alone : all are against him but she ; does not her poverty make her sensitive ? and equally sensitive must his poverty make him ; and if he thinks she is yielding to her mother, what will be his pain ? She judges him by herself, and feels for him by knowing what she herself would feel. There are times when she is mastered by her thoughts, and starts up with a resolution to defy her mother, to break her promise, and go forth and meet this man. Why doesn't she go into the kitchen, and see about the dinner ? or read, or take a pair of scissors and gather a bouquet from the green cool grounds there ? It is bad to be alone under such conditions ; to be alone and idle ; to be sitting with fixed downcast eyes beholding nothing but the passionate ,

phantasmagoria which pass along the mind.

When she is older how she will laugh at all this !

She is still in the drawing-room when Ethel comes in. How charming the fair-haired girl looks of mornings when fresh and fragrant from her lengthened toilette and amiable after the repose of the night ! The little cap—such a pert fanciful little cap!—on the side of her head makes her resemble some old master's study of a beautiful young female, and she only wants the exposed bosom and the high girdle to complete the agreeable imposture.

She swims up to Fan, and gives her a soft kiss and a softer "Good-morning dear," and then says, "I hope nothing more has passed between you and auntie. You look very dull and low-spirited."

"I told mamma that I wouldn't go and meet Jack," Fan answers, moodily. "He'll

be waiting for me, and I ought to be there. And it's enough to drive me mad, for I've made promises to both, and don't know which to keep."

"Did you tell auntie that you won't meet him at all?" Ethel asks, with a little eagerness which she suppresses quickly.

"No, I meant for to-day—I wouldn't meet him to-day," answers Fan, passionately.

"What is fretting you, dear? Are you thinking that he may misjudge your absence?"

Fan nods sullenly.

"I wouldn't think that. After all, he ought to know that if you are not there, it's through no fault of yours. If auntie is dead against you, what *are* you to do? He has no right to add to your unhappiness by leading you to think that he will misconstrue your motives. You can't be always by his side to tell him why you can't meet him when he wants you—it's not fair in

him to expect it. He ought to trust you, and make you feel that he trusts you."

"But I am sure he was miserable all day yesterday after leaving this house; and will be eager to meet me this morning to hear what mamma has said, and to make arrangements for the future," cries Fan, her fine eyes looking fiery, and dark from contrast with her pale face.

"I am going into the town myself. If I should meet Mr. Huntley by chance, is there any message I can give him from you?" Ethel says in a very easy quiet way.

"Yes," answers Fan, quickly. "You can tell him that I longed to meet him this morning, but that I can't defy mamma's wishes too daringly. You know my motive as well as I do, and you will explain it thoroughly, Ethel; will you?"

"I will, dear, with pleasure . . . that is to say if I meet him. You don't want me to go in search of him, do you?"

Ethel answers with a laugh, as if that would be rather too much of a good thing.

“ You will find him on the sands if you go there. I don’t ask you to go . . . but I should like you to meet him just to tell him how dull I am, and . . . and that my mother has said some hard thing to me . . . and that I love him very dearly, Ethel.”

Her eyes glisten, and she bites over her underlip quickly and angrily.

“ Oh, Fanny! do excuse me if I was a little selfish just this moment!” Ethel cries, posing herself in an attitude of ravishing entreaty, “ I don’t much care for the sands of a morning, as you know, and I thought perhaps you wouldn’t wish me to search for him among the crowd. But I’ll look for him with pleasure to serve you, dear. I only want to be allowed to help you. I should ask you to do a great deal for me if I were in your place, and I will

cheerfully carry messages for you all day long if you like."

And she gets up, and seems to wait only for any final sentence Fanny may wish to convey to Jack before she leaves the room.

"You will tell him that I'll try to meet him to-morrow—he'll know where," Fanny says. "And ask him to be patient, and to have perfect faith in me, and—and give him this, will you, Ethel?"

She takes a small gold cross out of her purse.

"He'll know what this little keepsake means," she says with a smile.

"Faith, is it not, Fanny? what a pretty idea!" Ethel answers, and very carefully puts the trinket in her pocket.

Poor Fan! that cross was papa's present to her when she was a little girl, and it is as sacred to her as the lock of his hair, which she wears in a locket. Ethel knows the story of that cross, and goes out of the

room with the conviction that Fan's love for Jack is very much deeper than she has hitherto suspected.

Fan sees her leave the house presently, a charming coquettish little figure, in a well-fitting light grey dress, and pretty straw hat and yellow gloves. Her blue eyes look dark under the tinted parasol, as she turns them upon the window where Fan stands watching, and smiles at her.

Mrs. Rogers is not likely to give Fanny very much trouble about Jack that day. She sits behind her sewing-machine in the corner, and hopes, if Fan comes into the room, she won't say anything to lead to an argument. She believes that the "thing" will die a natural death if time be allowed, and quietly prides herself, as she plies her laborious foot, on the decisive course she has adopted in checking by command all secret intercourse between the lovers. That "things" of

this kind do die natural deaths, is quite certain ; but wouldn't the deaths be much more numerous than they are if the maternal physicians who undertake to kill them knew the right treatment to pursue ? Poor old long-legged Mrs. Jorkins, with her hooked nose and gleaming spectacles and plaid shawl, chasing her carroty-headed daughter about the town, day after day,—dashing out of her house after dark, and scouring the sands, and bursting away from the midday meal to catch Emily hiding with George under the platform of the pier—is very often ridiculed by Mrs. Rogers, who declares that she is hastening on her daughter's ruin by acting policeman in this way, and that the girl would be well enough if her mother interfered less and put more confidence in her. But when the culprit happens to be Fanny, Mrs. Rogers forgets her contempt of Mrs. Jorkins, and acts as much like that old lady as circumstances demand.



It is the interference that gives significance to love. Fan's fine spirit and good instincts would do everything for her that Mrs. Rogers wants, if nervous mamma would only give scope for their play.

Can you do worse than separate lovers? One would think that forcing them into being together would be the briefer and better remedy against their vows.

Laura scratching sonnets to Ernest's eyebrows to-night, comes home to lunch to-morrow and says, "It's all over, mamma. Ernest is not what I took him to be. I shall return him his letters," and has a little cry, and then goes and dresses for a flower-show.

Shall we plot and scheme and make ourselves miserable for such issues as these? Foolish Mrs. Rogers! Your hopes are a thousandfold more menaced by Fan's solitary thoughts in the drawing-room yonder than were she on the sands with Jack,

cracking jokes on the head-dresses of the people and smiling over the sweetmeats which Jack offers her in parentheses.

At one o'clock Ethel comes home and finds Fanny sitting in the parlour with her mother.

She puts her head into the room and gives Fanny a "look" which brings her into the passage, and they go together to Ethel's bedroom.

"I have seen him, dear," says the charming little blonde, removing her hat and smiling the sort of smile some faces wear when their owners consider they have acted virtuously.

"What did he say? You have been a long time gone. I thought you would have been back before this," Fan exclaims.

"I saw him on the sands from the pier. I didn't see him at once, and I couldn't be back sooner, for there were some shops I

wanted to call at after I had given him your message," answers Ethel, smoothing her hair with a brush, with her saucy nose pretty close to the glass.

"Well?" cries Fan, frowning in her eagerness.

Unfortunately for Ethel she has not the trick of presenting a story clearly. All the ideas are in her mind, but she can't arrange them in the order in which she would like to convey them.

The fact is she is quite unimpressionable to points which, when remembered, give clearness to narrative and make it graphic.

She has to think awhile before she answers, and Fanny watches her with devouring eyes.

"He was on the sands, dear. Very well; and I went after him, and when he was pretty close he saw me, luckily, for I shouldn't much like to have spoken

to him without being seen first. Well, I said, 'I've come to say that Captain Fanny—'

"Why Captain Fanny?" mutters Fan, peevishly. "Well?"

"That Fanny is very sorry that she can't meet you this morning. Her mamma made her promise that she wouldn't meet you secretly, and Fanny told me to tell you that her love,'—yes, I said that, and I hope, dear, I did right?—'her love makes her anxious not to aggravate her mamma too much.' He said he quite appreciated your reason, and when I gave him the cross he kissed it—I almost felt ashamed, dear: there were lots of people near us.—You can understand what I mean, can't you?"

All this time she is brushing her hair and talking to her face in the looking-glass.

"Was he disappointed, do you think, Ethel?"

"BIT—TER—LY!"

The word is delivered with immense emphasis, and is underscored by the expressive blue eyes which are turned upon Fanny for a moment.

"Did he say anything about our meeting again?"

"Yes. Will you meet him to-morrow, he wants to know, near the bathing-machine—wherever that is—on the sands?"

"Why couldn't you say so at once? Please tell me *everything*," Fanny cries, feeling that half the sweetness of Jack's messages will be destroyed by her having to ask Ethel for them.

"That's pretty nearly all, dear," answers Ethel quietly, putting down the hair-brush and smoothing her dress. "I wasn't long with him. I thought it very likely that you would meet him to-morrow, and that

what he has to say would be much better worth hearing from his lips than from mine. Besides, dear," with a soft, deprecating smile, "it wouldn't be quite the thing for me to carry *very* warm love-messages between you. Of course you know that I will do anything to serve you ; but he's not my sweetheart, and it would seem odd—to me at least—to be listening to his impassioned words about you. Some thoughts are great secrets, and it is not right that anybody but those they concern should hear them. I look upon them as sacred, myself."

Fan's judgment goes far enough to tell her that Ethel is right. If it went further it might lead her to a different conclusion. She is very much obliged to her cousin indeed, kisses her affectionately and plies her with a world of questions.

Was Jack *very* pleased to get the cross ? did he look *very* glum when he heard that

she couldn't meet him? Did he seem to be looking for her when Ethel saw him?

A score of years might have passed since they last met, to judge by the eagerness in her face, the soft rapture in her eyes, the passionate, fond, and foolish interrogatories with which she poses her cousin's imagination.

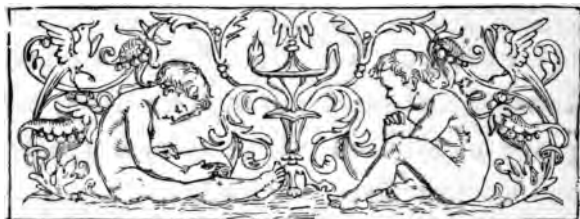
All Ethel's answers are such as Fanny wants to hear. She flushes up and looks happy for the first time that day, and again kisses Ethel, and thanks her for her sympathy and help.

But Mrs. Rogers grows hungry downstairs and sends Charlotte to tell the girls to come to lunch at once. So they break off and leave the bedroom, and all through the meal Fan is surprisingly amiable to Ethel, passes her the wine and the salt without being asked, admires the way in which she has done her hair, even indulges

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in a little joke about Mr. Sampson, whom Ethel says she met in the High-street, but grows constrained when mamma speaks, and has scarcely a look for her.





### CHAPTER III.

#### DEFIANCE.

**N**EXT morning is fine and hot, and Fan gets up in a pettish obstinate mood. She is very sulky with her mother when she meets her at breakfast, and frightens her by her manner. If it were not for that fear, mamma would ask her where she is going to-day, and that would make Fan reply that she had an appointment with Jack at half-past ten on the sands—after which the Deluge.

Fanny is quite sensible of the furtive,

sidelong, half-scared glances Mrs. Rogers delivers, and keeps the shafts off with a very sullen expression. When breakfast is over, she waits some moments expecting mamma to speak, then sweeps out of the room with as haughty an air as any offended queen could put on.

She is quite sure that her mother sees her leave the house, but she doesn't care, and walks with angry determined steps down the garden and gains the road, and makes straight for the sands.

She reaches the place of rendezvous before the appointed time, but Jack is there too, and in an instant the temper that has supported her so far is transformed—perfect sweetness and happiness come into her face, and when she gives him her hand it seems as if she never wanted to remove it from his clasp again.

The tide is at lowest ebb, and has left a spacious plain of sand. Rows of people

are sitting and groups of people are walking close beside the sea, but that part of the sands near the cliff where the old bathing-machine is, is quite deserted.

"I was horribly disappointed not to meet you yesterday," he says. "I was here a good hour before the time."

"I asked Ethel to look for you, and tell you why I could not come, Jack. I longed to be with you. But my mother looked so miserably suspicious and anxious at breakfast, that a sudden impulse made me say that I wouldn't leave the house ; and I kept my word, but I felt very wretched, dear."

He asks her to sit, and throws himself down by her side ; and here they are again pretty much as they were that day after the regatta, when he followed her and drove the photographer away : the same, but with a wonderful difference. He ought to know how well he is loved by looking

into her eyes. Speech could only deform their lovely intelligence, for her heart's confession is in them, and no words could come up to the height of their touching and beautiful argument.

And he? *Mon Dieu*, how should a man look when he is with the girl he loves? As Jack looks, no doubt. He pulls his long mustache and stares at her fondly, and with appropriating admiration. Is not she his own, with such a love for him as her eyes convey? Her fine figure, her noble head, the rich red on her cheeks, the tender smile that melts the imperious beauty of her whole expression into one of happy repose, make the rogue feel the triumph of his conquest; he takes out her cross and kisses it, and smiles at her with half-closed eyes.

"What do I owe you for this, pet?"

"Nothing, Jack."

"Here it is then," he says, and pulls out

a ring, and takes her hand. Her glove must come off, and he takes it off for her. How handsome he looks ! how tenderly he twitches the kid ! how firm and sweet is his clasp of the white wrist ! When the glove is off he slips the ring on, and the jewel in it flashes.

“ Oh Jack, how beautiful ! ”

And she is going to reproach him for buying it, but puts it to her lips instead, and says, “ I shan’t be able to wear it, dearest. You won’t be angry, will you ? I must not let mamma see it.”

“ But when will you be able to wear it, Fan ? How long are we to go on in this way ? ”

“ I don’t know. I hate to think. Can’t your father be induced to write a kind, or at least a polite, letter to mamma ? His rudeness has done all this mischief. Mamma would not have been so obstinately prejudiced had he written civilly or not at all.”

Jack frowns, and says, "We haven't much to hope for from my father. Did I read you his letter to me?—Well, it's best left unread. He's got a wretched old temper, and has borrowed a heap of graces from the Stock Exchange, and you can conceive what his manners are, how elegant and polite. What does he want? That I should marry anything—a scarecrow if you like—with money. *Merci, mon vieux!* I choose my own road and will walk in it, and care as little for his rage as—as—I was going to say as I do for your mother's."

"But we can't live without him, can we? I've got no money, Jack. I am abominably poor. If you knew how I hate myself for my poverty! Ethel is better off than I am. She has a hundred and twenty pounds a year. I wish she'd give it to me."

He laughs and says, "Is her nature an obliging one? Pretty as they are, aren't

her lips a little too thin for a generous nature?"

"She has been very kind, Jack, very sympathetic. We must feel very much obliged. I shall want her to carry messages between us sometimes, for I don't think it will be right—I mean politic, for us to meet constantly."

She watches him anxiously to see how this affects him.

"No, your cousin explained your reason yesterday, and I think it a wise one. Until we have thoroughly made up our minds to act, it won't do to turn your mother into a savage. I like pleasant marriages myself. I'd rather have people smiling about me and wishing me joy, and a proper service in a proper church, and a vestry full of witnesses, than a bleak, uncomfortable runaway affair. But suppose we should have to come to that, Fan?" he says with a sudden seriousness.

She looks at him earnestly, but is silent.

"You love me, dearest, don't you?"

"You know, Jack."

"As our love deepens, we shall want to be one, heart and soul, pet, shan't we? We shall grow miserable over these brief meetings and long partings, and if things go on *contrairy*, as old women say, what must happen? Can't you guess?"

She smiles slowly and thoughtfully and looks downwards, silent.

"Darling," he whispers, "we shall have to defy papa and mamma, and bear one name, and then hope for the best. It will come. I think this, sweet one, truly and honestly: when my father sees you he will fall in love with you, and forgive me. I believe this in my heart. You are very beautiful, Fanny."

He holds her hand tightly, and looks lovingly and passionately into her face. She smiles again thoughtfully, and takes a



deep breath. There was, perhaps, a moment's shock in the suggestion : a quick, subtle, mournful reference to her mother, that passed quickly, and made way for the flood of hopeful light that came down upon her heart with the meaning of his words.

"We will not speak of this yet, Jack," she answers softly.

"We will speak of it, dearest, but not *mean* it—yet."

"I don't want your father's sanction," she says, "but I think—I think, Jack, I must have mamma's."

"Suppose she won't give it?"

The band strikes up in the midst of the crowd that has been growing thicker and thicker ; the wind comes that way, and brings the boisterous cheerful music up with it. How glorious is the smooth sea sparkling under the pressure of the soft west wind ! Fan fixes her eyes on the ring that Jack has given her, and says—

"We must prove our love by patience, Jack, and then mamma will be our friend."

"I can wait, dear, but not too long. And you?"

"I *must* wait."

"That is a hard word. Be my own true love, Fan, and let your *musts* be for me only."

"Oh, Jack, I will do much—I will do a great deal for you," she answers, and puts her hand in his.

It is "See, the conquering hero comes!" that the band ought to be playing, instead of the bit of popular vulgarity it is trumpeting out. Jack is a conquering hero indeed, an irresistible fascinating rogue, for whom Fan's love is a crown and her beauty the spoils of his triumph. A man doesn't require much brains to make love handsomely: and Jack, who has some small wit of his own, but who for all practical purposes of civilization is as worthless as the

old bathing-machine he is sitting near, charms and dazzles Fanny with the soft sweetness of his whispers, his graceful hand-touching, his impassioned eyes, and the easy delightful tenderness of his voice. She could sit a whole day with him so, and be never weary of listening to him and admiring him. This time yesterday, she says to him, she was lonely and miserable in mamma's drawing-room, half wild with impatience for Ethel's return, that she might hear if Jack had been waiting for her. What a dull and dismal morning was that ! how bright and happy now ! It is he, she tells him, who makes her happiness. With him and without him is to be the darkness and sunshine of her life. Is he glad to hear her say so ? Will their love be always as it is now ? Hers will, she knows : and for answer he snatches a kiss, and then pours whispers into her ears which circulate like wine through her veins, and fill

her eyes with light and her face with roses.

The imperturbable old pier clock strikes one, and Fan gets up and goes home.

"Where have you been?" says Mrs. Rogers.

She has thrown open the parlour door, and challenges her daughter as she passes.

"On the sands," Fan answers, stopping.

"Alone?"

"No; with Mr. Huntley."

"After the promise you made me!" shrieks out Mrs. Rogers, and she grows scarlet.

"What promise?" says Fan, coming into the room. Mamma *will* raise her voice, and Fan doesn't want the servants to hear them.

"Why, that you wouldn't meet Mr.

Huntley in secret," cries Mrs. Rogers, backing away from the door.

"I never made any such promise. I said I wouldn't meet him yesterday morning, and I didn't," answers Fan, looking a regular amazon as she grasps her parasol and frowns at her mother.

"You're a wicked, deceitful girl," bursts out Mrs. Rogers, in a wild fury. "You're determined to defy me, and do what I've commanded you not to do. I *won't* have it, I tell you! Mr. Huntley *shan't* meet you, nor you him! I'll write to his father —I'll speak to a lawyer—I'll—I'll——"

Fan walks out of the room leaving mamma brandishing her arms.

She goes to her bedroom and locks the door. Presently comes Charlotte, and says, "Lunch is served, miss," through the keyhole, and Fan tells her to go away.

Then comes Ethel with the stealthiest

of little knocks, and softly tries the handle.

"*Do* come to lunch, dear; auntie is very miserable. She's been crying dreadfully. She feels that she has said too much. *Do* come, Fanny."

"I don't want any lunch."

"Then open the door, dear; I want to see you."

"I don't want to be seen. Leave me alone, Ethel, please."

And Ethel glides quietly downstairs.

In a few minutes a flopping tread is heard outside, and a knuckle hits the door, and a feeble, gasping voice says "Fanny."

No answer.

The feeble voice lifts itself up, and repeats, in the midst of a sob, "Fanny."

"I hear [you, mamma. I want to be left alone, please."

"Why have you locked the door? what

are you doing? Let me in, I say. Lunch is ready," sobs out Mrs. Rogers.

No answer.

"Do you hear me?" And Mrs. Rogers shakes the handle and cries out "Fanny" again, and I dare say pictures her child sitting with a bottle of laudanum beside her.

"I shan't open the door and I shan't come down to lunch, and I'll never forgive you for what you've said," exclaims Fan.

Whereupon a sound of violent sniffing breaks out on the landing, accompanied with inarticulate wails, which being over, Mrs. Rogers holds her breath to hear what will follow.

Nothing follows.

"I don't want you to come down to lunch," she quavers out, "but unlock the door; I won't come in, but I declare I'll not leave until I hear the key turned."

The key *is* turned, and makes such a hoarse and rusty outcry that there is no mistaking the fact.

“I’ll keep my word and not offer to come in,” cries Mrs. Rogers ; “but you are acting towards your mother with dreadful cruelty, and when she’s dead and gone you’ll remember her words. The idea of a child not feeling grateful to her mamma for saying she’s sorry because she spoke in anger ! I never heard of such a thing !”

And much comforted by the door being unlocked, Mrs. Rogers goes downstairs talking aloud to herself.

Fan sits with her hat on, and looks uncommonly beautiful and fierce as she glares out of window, and thinks of the reception her mother gave her, and contrasts it with Jack’s kindness and fondling. His suggestion that they should elope comes into her head, and instead of frightening kindles a hurried, angry pleasure in her.



Opposition of the kind her mother shows would soon drive her mad, she thinks. To be met every time she comes home with violent questions and outcries and accusations is an unendurable contemplation ; she would at last so hate the idea of returning home, that one day she would stop away altogether. Certainly she has spirit enough for a most dashing audacity, and if I were Mrs. Rogers I should be frightened out of my wits to think of my handsome daughter fresh from her lover, sitting alone in her bedroom, with my angry words to work in her like electricity in a thing rather too vital already.

Half an hour passes and then Fan takes off her hat, and, between ourselves, is not sorry to hear Ethel's voice at the door asking if she may come in.

What a white, delicate, golden little beauty it is, as it creeps up to Fan and gives her a kiss, and says—

"Never mind, dear, it'll all be right some of these days."

"I've made up my mind it shall," Fan answers. "I don't mean to stand this sort of thing for ever, I can tell you. How *dare* mamma say that I promised never to meet Jack in secret! She knows that's a story. Is it likely I would say such a thing? As he mayn't come to the house, of course I'll meet him out of doors—of course I will!" and down comes the heel of her boot on the floor.

"Were you with him this morning?"

"Yes, the whole morning," answers Fan, with an air of triumphant defiance.

"And did you find out that I gave your message correctly?" inquires the wistful little impostor.

"Oh, yes, and we're both greatly obliged to you, dear. Do you like this, Ethel?" She pulls Jack's ring out of her purse.

"What a sweet little ring! what pretty

taste he has ! This, indeed, looks as if you were both in earnest," Ethel says, and laughs a knowing little laugh.

Fan also laughs, and snatches at the ring with eager fingers, and hides it away in her purse.

"I shan't be able to wear it," she exclaims, "but it won't be long before I shall. We had a very serious talk this morning, Ethel, I can tell you. He said something that will frighten you to hear, I know, but *I* wasn't afraid. It will have to happen if mamma doesn't alter her conduct," and Fan gazes at Ethel with eyes of gloomy mystery.

"Don't tell me any of your secrets ; I had rather not hear them," says Ethel, smiling and arching her eyebrows.

"Well, I don't know that I need have any secrets from you," answers Fan. "You're proving a friend to me, and I think you have a right to hear things."

"At all events, don't say afterwards that I tried to pump you," Ethel says, in a tone quite free from resentment.

"Jack says that we shall have to elope—and that's my belief."

Ethel doesn't look in the smallest degree frightened. She just smiles one of her colourless smiles, and answers—


"It won't much matter how you get married, so long as you *are* married, will it?" and she adds, after a moment's pause and with a sweet droll grimace, "I should like to elope myself. It must be the most romantic thing in the whole world."

"Yes; but how would it affect mamma—I mean in my case?" Fan says, rather disliking Ethel's easy falling in with her views.

"I don't think auntie would mind. Of course she'd be upset for a time, but that would wear off, and she'd argue that everything was for the best, and call you back

to her, and so you'd be friends and have Jack as well. What made you think I should be frightened, dear? An elopement isn't so very dreadful. If people love each other, and mayn't meet or speak, and so on, what *are* they to do? It's all very well for old people to say it's wicked to fly in a parent's face, but who'd fly if one wasn't obliged to?"

"That's just what I feel. I don't want to elope, I can assure you. I heartily agree with Jack, who says give *him* pleasant weddings and smiling friends, and that sort of thing. But if mamma loses her temper, and tells me I'm a story-teller, and commands me not to see Jack, I *must* become undutiful, that's all, and be called a name or two, and be happy in my own way. Isn't he a darling fellow, Ethel? Isn't he worth a sacrifice? I know how I felt just now, when I thought of his dear words and kind smiles, and contrasted mammy's red



face and her dreadful fury. She knows I love her ; but why doesn't she give in to me in this ? We could be perfectly happy then, and if Jack had time allowed him, I'm *certain* that his wretched old father would be sorry, or die, or do something, and then all would be well."

"I wish I could give you my income, dear," says Ethel in her meekest way. "I'd much rather you should have it than I. It isn't much, but it would help you and your sweetheart on until his father died or forgave him. But there's no use in wishing, is there?"

And she is no doubt very sensible that there is no use in wishing, and grateful that it is so.

At another time Fan would sneer at this offer, knowing as well as Ethel herself that it meant nothing at all. But just now she is grateful for Ethel's company and attention, and for taking her part, and so passes

over her remark, and says that she (meaning Ethel) had best not stop too long with her ; mamma will wonder what they are talking about, and heaven knows, she has no wish that mamma should trouble herself about her at all.

So Ethel, always quick to take the hints she wants to act upon, gets up, and qualifying all seeming abruptness of departure by some well-chosen expression of goodwill and offers of help, quietly leaves the room.



## CHAPTER IV.

### THE EGG IS LAID.

**F**ORTNIGHT goes by—the wretchedest fortnight in the world. There is no mistake about Mrs. Rogers's obstinacy; she hates Jack, and is goaded into fury when Fan tells her, in answer, that she has been with him alone. No one would give the kind elderly lady with the motherly face the credit for being a regular old savage in her prejudices, and as passionate and resolute as Fan herself.

She stamps her foot, and shrieks out,



"You're a wicked girl for disobeying me, and acting in this way!" and Fanny defies her, and says that she's sick of her life, and wishes herself dead, and above all, that she *will* meet Jack. It is always, "What harm has he done?" when they get upon the subject. "Is it Jack's fault that his father's a mean old wretch?"

"Yes it is," Mrs. Rogers cries out. "It's his fault that we know anything at all about his father. I will never sanction your marriage with him, and if you had one spark of proper feeling," etc., etc., and so the battles rage, and the combatants rush away from each other in tears and bitterness.

Ethel plays a ticklish part, but she plays it well. She plays friend to both mother and daughter, and comes in for a full share of confidence from both of them. Mrs. Rogers is incessantly moaning to herself that she wishes her child had Ethel's dis-

position and meekness, as she talks to the placid little gold-haired thing, and tells her how dreadfully Fanny's behaviour is preying on her mind, and how she would give a hundred pounds out of her pocket "if that odious Mr. John Huntley would leave the town, and never make himself heard of again."

On the other hand, the same little gold-haired thing is of great use to Fan. It happens several times that partly owing to fear, and partly to remorse — for Mrs. Rogers's feelings work a havoc in her face, and she is never cheerful and gentle now, but fretful, and suspicious, and morose—I say, it happens several times that Fanny falters out a promise to mamma not to meet Jack—mentally meaning for that day only: and once she actually seems on the point of cutting Jack adrift for good and all, when she falls into mamma's arms, and bursts into tears and implores her not to

make herself unhappy about her ; and on these occasions Ethel is very useful ; taking messages to Jack with cheerful alacrity, positively calling on him at his lodgings at Fan's urgent request, and bringing back the most amiable tidings of his fervent constancy and inalienable devotion.

But Fan is never so profoundly miserable as when she has given one of her promises to mamma ; and that wild and demonstrative impulse of affection that made mamma hopeful for a few hours was a most fugitive emotion indeed, a twirl of the compass card, soon steadied by the powerful magnetic attraction of her life at this period.

"I *can't* live without him," she cries out again and again to kind and sympathetic Ethel. "I try to please mamma, but the effort is heartbreaking, and I am growing ill with all this trouble."

Which is true enough. The red roses have left her cheeks, and her appetite has

followed them, and there are violet-coloured hollows under her eyes, which tell of broken rest and passionate hidden uneasiness. All this might have been expected. Fan's obstinacy that deadens her sensibility to instincts, which never failed to govern her once on a time, is the feverish championing of a headlong fanatical love.

Look at her face : at the dark kindling eyes—at the impassioned thoughtfulness of expression—the firm red lips—the square forehead, gaining a new suggestion of power from the rough thick hair—and you will gather from these, and other indescribable signs, the existence of an underplay of strong emotions dangerous as death in their uncontrollableness, and promising a ceaseless shock and clangour within, and the worst kind of attrition the heart can be subjected to when made boisterous and audacious by opposed desire.

She comes in one day quietly, and steals upstairs to her bedroom.

They are in August now, and the weather is as hot as it was in July. The chalky soil takes the heat and retains it, and the temperature was equatorial on the sands under the cliff where Fanny and her lover had been sitting since two o'clock.

It is near five o'clock, and at half-past five they dine. Fan takes off her hat and plunges her face in cold water, and goes to the open window where a small air is stirring, and lets the draught dry the moisture on her face. This to be sure cools her, and she hardly troubles to think that a process of this sort is not recommended for the skin.

When her cooling task is performed, she puts her elbow on the window-sill, and leans her handsome face forward and looks down upon the garden with an expression in her

steady luminous eyes that would serve her inimitably in a sleep-walking scene.

Her occupation is one of those absorbing reveries which detain people for hours ; but she breaks from it after a bit, snatches a look at herself in the glass, and goes downstairs.

Ethel is killing the half-hour before dinner with the piano, murdering music as well as time ; and Mrs. Rogers in the parlour works her sewing-machine in the accustomed corner. Of course she knows that Fanny has been out since lunch, but she has got to feel a dread of putting the question now, and makes no remark as Fanny comes into the room and sits down.

The constraint is painful. A hearty resentment against her daughter's determined disobedience influences all Mrs. Rogers's thoughts now : they rarely kiss ; there is no familiar "mammy" spoken ; with Mrs.

Rogers it is a stiff "Fanny," and with Fanny a cold, distant speech that would affront a stranger. It is civil war—the worst kind of war in the world—when heavy exactions are demanded and no concessions made; when instincts, which are dumb in feuds among strangers, put in their plea and actuate bitterness.

Mrs. Rogers just raises her eyes and bends them upon the little hammering needle again. Fan does not look at her for some time, and then her glance turns upon her and flies off, and turns once more and settles, and the most pathetic wistfulness comes into her face that words can express, and her eyes grow as imploring as a wounded stag's.

When dinner is served Ethel comes in, and they go through a heavy, stupid meal. The songs of the birds, the glories of the departing sun, the gentle murmur of leaves, and the ripe summer smells which come out

of the garden yield no compensation for the dismalness of this repast.

Ethel, smart and flowing as a dressmaker's picture, in a costume that illustrates the most recent importation into the current graces of fashion—the child is never an hour behind the mode—gives by her aspect a touch of absurdity to the solemn surliness of the meal. Such a blonde as this, with its wonderful waist and eyes, should be the gayest little rogue in the world ; and her demeanour is, so to speak, but a thin veil that improves the complexion of her saucy character ; she makes an antithesis of Mrs. Rogers's face, and the dreary silence is pitifully foolish enough to raise a laugh with the tight, trim, fashionable, fair-haired little figure in the midst of it, to bring out its absurd features.

Those features certainly are absurd and something more. Mrs. Rogers is acting with provoking folly. Observe her scowl-



ing over her plate, and asking Fan if she'll have some more meat, without looking at her. She thinks this treatment is the only way to bring Fan to her senses.

I wonder how many girls are driven into dreadful mistakes by such ill-judged behaviour on the part of their parents? The change is too sudden.

Before old Huntley sent his letter Mrs. Rogers was a mild, good-natured woman ; now she is all day in a perpetual fret, with a face so full of reproach that one look at it is as bad as an hour's scolding. She told Ethel yesterday that she *hated* Mr. Huntley, meaning Jack ; and so she does—I think she would lift her hand to him. It is a bitter prejudice not to be accounted for by Fan's love for him. There, of course, is the origin ; but it is grown into a passionate dislike by incessant thinking of him as a poor underhand creature who is fighting with her for possession of her daughter, the

wretch ! and who is beating her triumphantly every day.

Why Mrs. Rogers notices nothing peculiar in Fan's manner and expression is, she doesn't look at her ; but that Ethel reads a story is perfectly certain from the great care she takes to see nothing.

Fan's eyes are bright with a strange excitement, but there is something odd and mournful in the moodiness that from time to time comes into her face, and always when her gaze has rested for awhile on her mother. She pleads at times with her brilliant eyes, and is like one who is dumb that craves for what it cannot ask. She seems perpetually on the verge of a confession to be spoken amid sobs, but for ever contains herself, and looks away from the face opposite, in which the hardness and the coldness cannot silence the eloquence of old and beloved association.

She is the first to leave the table, and

goes into the drawing-room, and there the listlessness and abstraction of her mood is illustrated by the way in which she wanders about and then stands at gaze, not knowing that she seeks a chair, and perplexed by the trivial want that will not define itself.

The long crimson light shines in through the windows and gives a glorious lustre to her rich hair. She leans upon the table, and her firm, white, round arms show through the muslin sleeves and take an indescribable beauty from the dark-polished wood on which they repose.

Ethel comes in presently, and as she opens the door, Fan hears the whirr of the sewing-machine in the parlour. The harsh mechanical sound vexes her, and anger flushes her face: she looks with her gleaming eyes at Ethel, who stops short and in a creamy whisper says,

“Don’t let me intrude, dear, if you want to be alone.”

"It's the same to me whether I'm alone or not," Fan answers. "Shut the door if you're going to stop, Ethel. That sewing-machine makes a disgusting noise."

Ethel closes the door softly and seats herself on the sofa, hoisting one leg upon it so that her dress makes a broad spread, and lays her golden-haired head upon the pretty chintz.

Fan watches her with odd intensity, and yet is not thinking of her.

"This is not a good sort of world for girls, I think," says the little thing presently; "it's made more for men than for us. Men do what they like and make laws and please themselves, and I wish I had been born a man."

"A girl is a great fool to be miserable longer than she can help," Fan answers, leaning her chin on her hand and looking rather like Mrs. Siddons in Sir Joshua's picture. "But it's not the *men* who are

tyrants—it's the *mothers*. They are the persons who expect one to do exactly what they want—which men don't—at least, men can make allowances. Look at mamma's treatment of me!"

Ethel shakes her head as much as to say, "It's not right; it's certainly not right."

"And why is she behaving so?" Fanny goes on, leaning her chin on both hands and fixing a pair of tremendously earnest eyes on Ethel. "Entirely because I love Jack. What earthly reason has she for objecting to him? I allow that he's poor just now, but he'll be rich when his father dies. But with that exception there's not a thing to be said against him.—Oh, Ethel!" she says, after a short pause, and bringing the Oh out with a great sigh, "I have made up my mind—I don't know that I ought to tell you—but I don't like to have the secret all alone—can I trust you, Ethel?"

"Yes, dear, you can," Ethel answers, looking at her fully. "But I don't want to hear your secrets—I'd rather not know them."

"I'll tell you this secret if you'll faithfully promise to keep it."

Ethel suppresses her curiosity cleverly, and deprecates the confession with her sweet and modest eyes, but says nothing.

Fan leans forward, and says in a whisper, "I'm going to elope with Jack."

Ethel looks frightened, and answers quickly, "When?"

"To-morrow evening," Fan says in the same curious whisper.

"Really and truly?"

"Yes; I am driven into it—I have promised him, and I'll keep my word," cries Fanny, passionately.

Ethel turns sick, and drops her chin: she fights like a fury for self-mastery, and in a few moments looks at Fan with a smile.

"How can I help you, dear?" she says.

Those who admire good acting should have seen this stroke. It was a burst of genius, the greater because it was provoked by no hope of applause, it was achieved not to excite but to defy the appreciation of the only looker on.

"You cannot help me, Ethel," Fan answers, sinking her forehead on to her arm, and speaking with her face hidden, "I should never have done this had mamma treated me differently. It will give her a dreadful shock, I know. I wish to God she would let me spare her this grief. But she won't be reasonable! she won't be reasonable!" she moans. "She won't let me see him. She hates him—you know how bitterly. What would be the good of waiting? She would rather see me dead than consent to my marriage with Jack—and why should I go on enduring this life,

why *should* I?" she cries, and lifts her head with her eyes flashing.

All Ethel's hidden forces are under control again. The soft melancholy of her face is quickened into an expression of eager tender interest.

"What are your arrangements, dear?" she asks.

Fan winces to the question. It is a homely one, and the reply it must provoke is bound to violate the romance of the proposed action.

"I am to meet him to-morrow evening," she answers, and stops, blushing, though Ethel is in the secret, and sympathizes with her.

"Will you take any luggage?"

"No! how could I take any luggage?"

"But will you go just as you are?" cries Ethel, and her blue eyes open.

"Yes, and it can't be helped. We shall go to an hotel, and next morning we shall be



married, and then . . . and then I don't care what happens."

"Where is the hotel?"

"In London. Jack knows it. He . . . he . . ."

She is going on with some reassuring explanation, but stops short again, blushing furiously, and looking marvellously handsome, and then stares angrily at Ethel ready to deliver a volley if an objection is hinted.

But Ethel doesn't find any objection. She comes back quietly to the point.

"What train will you go by?"

"Why, the one that leaves at a quarter to nine."

"Will you meet him at the station?"

"No, that would be madness. I shall pretend to have been asked to the Matthews's, and I shall leave here at about half past seven, but I shan't go to the Matthews's. . . . There, that's

enough Ethel. I wish I hadn't to do it."

She leaves her seat with a passionate movement, and walks with a blind air about the room. Ethel watches her in silence. There is a glorious sunset behind the trees, but the gloom of evening is gathering in the room. The swallows fly high, and the rich notes of a thrush come with exquisite sweetness out of the garden. Fan goes to the door, and opens it and listens. The whirr of the sewing-machine is silent, and there is a perfect stillness throughout the house. She closes the door, and comes back to Ethel with her dark eyes full of tears.

"There will be a terrible scene when mamma finds I am gone, Ethel. What will you do? She will charge you with helping me to run away from her, and so won't be able to find any consolation in what you may say. O Ethel! You must be kind

and good to her. You must tell her that I loved her dearly, and would never have left her had she held out the least hope to me that I should marry Jack some day. To-morrow night will be the hardest part. She will not be able to hear from me until Thursday, and what will she think? But she *must* know there is no sin in what I am doing. I shall be Jack's own wife, and come back to her, and she will learn to love him as I do—no! not as I do, but she will love him for my sake, for he is very, *very* dear to me."

She clasps her hands, and looks upwards with a kind of rapture in her eyes, and then paces about the room again very softly, and with deep thought in her manner.

"And this time to-morrow you will be with Mr. Huntley ready to take the train to London?" Ethel says in a small thin voice, and her little fingers twitch the sides of her dress.

"I shall have left this house," Fanny replies, going close to the clock to see the time. "He is to meet me at the end of the parade, and we are to wait until it is dark, and then come round to the station by the steps in the cliff."

She wanders towards the window, and looks out.

"I don't know what gives me the strength to do this thing. Sometimes I could do it ten times over, sometimes I dare not think of it. What will mamma say?" she exclaims, turning swiftly. "How will she act, do you think? Will it pain her very, very much?"

"That's to be expected, dear, but I will talk to her as well as I can."

"And in case she shouldn't answer my letter, you must write to me and tell me what she has said, and if she is very miserable, and what I had best do. You must promise this, Ethel."

“Yes, dear, faithfully; you shall have all the news. I was thinking that as you will take no change of dress with you, hadn’t I best make up a parcel and send it on?”

“Yes, if you will; but I can’t think of things like that now. I feel dreadfully miserable. Am not I horribly wicked to be deliberately planning this thing? But suppose I were to go to mamma and tell her that I meant to leave her, but will not if she’ll let me have Jack here at this house, and be with him when I wish, would that do any good? Wouldn’t she fly into a passion, and send Jack an insulting letter, and make me more determined to end all this miserable business?”

“I am afraid it would do no good,” Ethel answers, shaking her head thoughtfully. “How strange the house will be without you! I shall miss you dreadfully, Fanny. What courage you must have to

elope! I could *talk* of it, but when it came to the point—at least, I don't know: when one is desperately in love one will do anything. It is only people who are not in love themselves who wonder at the things lovers will do."

Fan has gone to a chair near the window, out of the flush of the sunset, and is crying silently. She is intensely miserable, and too much engrossed with thoughts of the overwhelming step she is bent upon taking, to give attention to Ethel's easy acquiescence in an action against which one would have thought the little lady-like proper creature would have earnestly protested.

There was no sincerity in Ethel's meaning when she said that she "would miss Fanny dreadfully;" but just those idle words have flared up in a great light in Fanny's mind and illuminated a thousand memories. She is in a mood when the

balance of inclination is neither this way nor that, when a word or a look, like a grain in a chemist's scales, will give her a leaning, only unfortunately such moods generally visit us when the personal influence that would make them propitious is absent. Let mamma come in now and say a kind word to Fanny, and it's odds that the girl alters her mind about the elopement. But mamma remains in the parlour, and Fanny's tears, after flowing silently awhile, cease, and the recollection of bitter words comes uppermost, and helps her love for Jack to assert its supremacy over all other emotions, and eager and resentful with the new impulse, she dries her eyes with a passionate gesture, and says to Ethel—

“If ever I am called upon to account for my conduct, you will bear me out when I declare that I was forced by mamma into eloping. There is nothing I would not

have done to please her had she been patient with me, had she given me leave to love my boy. Is it not hard," she cries, piteously, "that I should be talking like this to you? I *must* speak out of my full heart. But mamma would not listen to me, and I am forced into confessing and justifying myself to you, who have no right to know the plan that makes me feel wicked to think about. Well, dear, you will be none the worse for having a cousin who could elope with a sweetheart," she goes on with a curious fine scorn absolutely out of keeping with the occasion. "You were always more lady-like and pure and gentle in feeling and action than I—so they have told you—and nothing that I can do is likely to influence you, surely. . . Mamma has brought this on herself. Mind, she will feel this truth when I am gone. Thanks for your sympathy, Ethel. This is my secret and no business of yours. I



think I could kill you if you made a fool of me by opening your lips to my mother."

She stoops with flashing eyes, and kisses Ethel's forehead, sighs, and looks irresolutely around her, and goes out of the room in an aimless, vacant manner.



## CHAPTER V.

### THE EGG IS HATCHED.

**I**T may be no part of Ethel's policy to tell Mrs. Rogers what an enormous and overpowering step her daughter is meditating, but I don't think she is restrained from blabbing either by Fan's ghastly threat to do for her if she does, or by any lively sympathy with Fan's hopes and wishes.

Mrs. Rogers, then, has no suspicion. How without Ethel to tell her, or Fan to drop on her knees and sob out the story,

can Mrs. Rogers find out her daughter's intentions? The moping, the paleness, the sighs, the untasted food, all these things, and a thousand more, Mrs. Rogers is used to. Upon my word people are very easily deceived. Yes, the shrewdest of us, from the Lord Chancellor down to Mr. Abednego, the sheriff's officer, are easily humbugged, and people humbug us best when they go about it indolently and without too great a concern in the effects they design to produce.

Mrs. Rogers is quite sure that she has a piercing eye, and has such faith in its penetration that she sees nothing at all; and Fanny deceives her easily because she happens to be too miserable to take trouble to act a part well. Mrs. Rogers puts her behaviour down to Jack, and wishes the wretch hanged. Never a greater misfortune befell her than her acquaintance with the Matthews; but for them Jack

had been unknown. In the lifetime of Mr. Rogers such a misfortune as this would have been impossible. He was a resolute man, and would have dealt with young Mr. Huntley expeditiously, disposed of him by a few felicitous questions: "What can you settle on my daughter, sir?"—"What do you mean to do when you're married?"—"What's your income, young man, and who are you?" and so on, and made Jack contemptible, and forced him to own himself helplessly unqualified as a husband. Such thoughts as these occur to Mrs. Rogers, and such have been her thoughts ever since she learnt through old Mr. Huntley's letter that Fan was engaged. But she fully believes that to-morrow will be as to-day, and has no dimmest suspicion that to-night is to summarily wind up the current troubles, and introduce a quite new description of misfortune.

She has a little cold and breakfasts in

bed ; and so does Ethel, who must surely think the inconvenient and disorderly habit good for the complexion, for she is now pretty regular in this arrangement.

Fan comes downstairs with a yellow face and feverish eyes, and her hair looking as wild and shaggy as ever it did in a gale of wind. Charlotte tells her that missis will breakfast in bed, and when Fan hears that mamma has a cold, she starts up with the idea of going to her, but abandons the intention, and languidly applies herself to the tea and toast. But she only does this to throw Charlotte off her guard, for she catches the maid staring : and when she has gone away with missis's breakfast, Fan puts the toast down, thirstily swallows the tea, and leaves the table.

Plainly speaking, moods visit her from time to time which threaten, while they last, to make her scheme impossible. When she looks around her, not a detail but seems

to catch at her heart, and hold her prisoned to the dear old home and to the memories which make it dear. Her radical nature is all tenderness and impulse, qualities which have gifted the silent homely memorials about her with eloquence and pathos. They appeal to her now. That picture of her father! the dark mute eyes are reading her thoughts, and laying their dead command upon her. The bookcase, with its old-fashioned stores, delivers its message and lays siege to her memory. Out of the whole familiar room, her eyes wrest the hidden subtle associations with which it is pregnant. She cries silently, and sits before the open window playing with her fingers, while the vine-leaves rustle round the window, and the morning breeze salutes her with offerings of music and incense.

She is in the garden when her mother comes downstairs, and she stops there pretty well all morning. She is afraid to

meet her mother, and even shuns the house, and keeps under cover of the hedge near the field. She takes pieces of straw and plaits them ; she pulls the flowers about her and fashions them into nosegays : but whatever she does, she does not long : the half-finished plaits are soon thrown down, the flowers are soon scattered, and she leans her upon the gate and swings there awhile, with such a hurrying rush of thoughts in her mind that her pulse beats madly to them.

She has no appointment to meet Jack that day. She will not see him until the evening, and then she will stop with him for good and all. It is her passionate affection for the man that keeps her steadily fronting the irremediable project they have designed between them ; all her instincts, all her generous humane qualities, the tender and beautiful sensibility that makes her nature capacious in the finest womanly

sense, with its influence, pluck at her heart to withdraw it from its resolve ; but her love is a fever, fitful perhaps at times, but which gains strength after every brief relapse, from the very tenderness and deep melancholy of the humour which render it intermittent.

She returns to the house a short time before lunch and goes upstairs quietly ; but when half-way she stops, and returns and enters the parlour.

Her mother sits in an arm-chair near the table reading. Her nose is red with the cold, the windows are closed, and the fierce sun beating on the glass heats the room to the temperature of an oven.

“ You oughtn’t to go into the garden without a hat,” she says to Fanny. “ You’ll be covered with freckles.”

“ I am going to drink tea at the Matthews’s to-night,” Fan answers, that lie being both in and on her mind.



Mrs. Rogers looks up suspiciously.

"Are you going to meet anybody there?" she asks.

The question, or rather the suspicion it conveys, makes Fanny hard.

"I am sure I don't know," she answers.  
"I didn't ask."

"I would rather you didn't go, Fanny."

"I have accepted, and don't see why I need not go," replies Fanny, irritated by her own falsehood and her mother's opposition.

"You know my reasons for my not wishing you to go," says Mrs. Rogers, sniffing loudly.

"What? speak plainly, mamma. You are always attacking me in this side fashion. Aren't the Matthews's respectable enough for us to know?"

And her eyes flash lightning out of her pale face.

"Mr. Huntley may be there, and I don't

wish you to meet him," cries Mrs. Rogers, speaking with a dry throat, and her heart beating all over her body.

"And suppose Mr. Huntley should not be there?" says Fan with a sneer.

"How dare you make mouths at me, miss?" shrieks out Mrs. Rogers. "You are growing worse and worse."

"Because you are driving me mad with these incessant attacks. Why don't you lock me up in a room? Why don't you hire a man to watch my door, to see that Mr. Huntley doesn't creep in through the key-hole? It'll end in something of that kind, won't it?" And she turns away with a contemptuous bitter laugh.

"I think you'd be very glad to see me dead. You know that I am unwell—too ill even to sew. And you don't ask me how I am?" sobs Mrs. Rogers. "This wretched young man has utterly changed your nature. But it is easily understood.

He knows that I consider him a worthless fellow, and I suppose he never loses a chance to speak ill of me, and I dare say you listen to him willingly enough."

She bursts into tears, and Fan flings out of the room.

She is glad of the excuse this quarrel gives her not to come to lunch. She goes wearily upstairs, wishing to God that the day were done—that the morrow were here—that the bitter business of leaving home were over, and she and Jack one. Ethel is in her bedroom, and Fan turns in there, and casts herself on the little velvet arm-chair that prettily occupies a place at the foot of Ethel's bed.

"Haven't you been out of your room yet?" she asks, smoothing and smoothing her thick hair backwards with a heedless vacant motion.

Ethel is either arranging or cleaning the

contents of her jewel-box, and a diamond earring trembles like a dew-drop in her hand, whilst she answers, looking at it : " Yes, but I found auntie rather sulky with her cold, and you were invisible, so I have been busying myself here just to pass the time."

" How frightfully long the morning has been ! This day will *never* go. I feel so miserable that I wish myself dead. I had another row, just now, with mamma. I asked her why she doesn't lock me up in my room. I declare I would kill myself rather than go on leading this life."

" The evening will come fast enough," Ethel says with a little smile. " But what an evening it will be for me ! I am afraid of it. When auntie finds you are gone what will happen ? I wish you would take me with you. I would much rather be out of the house than in it, I assure you."

“Not very much will happen, you’ll find,” Fan exclaims bitterly. “I don’t think mamma cares about me very greatly—at least, her behaviour latterly hasn’t shown much love; and when she finds I have gone, she’ll abuse me and Jack, and rave about it, and then grow sullen and silent. That’s what I prophesy.”

But her air of would-be sarcasm and levity sits very uneasily upon her. She stops suddenly as though miserably ashamed of her speculations. She knows their untruth, and her heart turns upon her for uttering them.

Ethel places the earring in its case, and takes out a bracelet.

“I want to ask you, dear,” she says, looking at the bracelet as though she thinks more of it than her words, “whether I am to own that I know where you are gone when auntie asks me what keeps you so late? I should prefer to pretend not

to have a suspicion of what you have done, for I hate scenes, and really believe that auntie will be *very* violent with me if I tell her plainly that I was in the secret of your elopement from the beginning. Of course," she goes on, "my telling her the truth will save a deal of bother, because she is certain to send Charlotte for you when it grows late, and then there will be a fine muddle! Charlotte won't find you at the Matthews's—you haven't been there at all, they'll tell her—there'll be a search, and it may be midnight before the truth comes out."

"You don't appear to treat it as a very serious thing," says Fanny peevishly. "I would give all I have in the world not to be obliged to run away. I wouldn't grieve mamma if I could help it. Why is she so hard?"

"Yes, dear, but you don't tell me what I'm to do," answers Ethel softly, shut-

ting up the jewel-box and folding her hands.

“*How* can I advise you?” cries Fan passionately. “*I* shan’t be here to know what happens. Are you afraid? *You* won’t suffer. You promised to do your best to soothe and cheer mamma, and you will do that,” she says, softening her voice and looking wistfully.

Before Ethel can answer, Charlotte pops her head in to say that lunch is ready, and Fan leaves her chair quickly, and calls to the girl to bring a sandwich and a glass of wine to her bedroom, and to tell her mother that she has a headache, and means to lie down.

“I hope she didn’t overhear us!” Ethel exclaims in a whisper.

Fan makes a gesture of indifference.

“I am going to write,” she says. “Mamma will know that my headache is feigned, and put it down to our quarrel

just now. I *cannot* sit in the room with her, and watch her and think of the misery I am going to cause her."

She walks hastily into her bedroom, and slams the door.

What is she going to write? a letter to mamma, telling her that she has gone off with Jack, and hoping to be forgiven.

Certain conventional necessities attend all undertakings of a romantic and poetical nature, and a primary condition of elopements would appear to be the little pathetic, tear-blotted, cocked-hat note fixed upon mamma's pincushion, or thrust into papa's dressing-gown pocket, so that he may find it when it is too late to do anything.

She takes a writing-desk, and sits down to begin her letter: but first she must open the door to Charlotte and receive the wine and sandwiches she ordered. She



drinks the wine and begins to write, but when she is halfway down the page, she tears up the paper and recommences : and three times she does this before she succeeds in condensing her meaning. Her note reads thus :

“I have gone off with Jack, and shall be married to him in London to-morrow morning. I am very, very sorry to grieve you. You have not treated me kindly. I should not have acted in this way had you sanctioned our love.—FANNY.”

All the fine upbraidings, all the sentimental appeals which she started with in her other letters are left out. She is no hypocrite even in wrong-doing. She has made up her mind to misbehave herself, and loathes the prosy excuses which a sentimental sinner could deliver by the yard.

Her letter being done she puts it in her pocket, and goes and lies down upon the bed. The room is warm, the afternoon sun shines upon the open window, and the hot breeze softly flaps the window-blind, the sultry murmur of the bees comes out of the garden, and great blue-bottles buzz fiercely as they fly into the room and out again.

Languid with the heat, and prostrated by the conflict that has been raging for hours in her heart, Fan lies white and still upon the bed ; but her great eyes rove about, and now they fix themselves upon the Prayer-book and Bible lying on the chest of drawers, and she thinks of Sunday mornings and going to church with mamma, and the hot scented atmosphere of the church, and the faces of the townspeople in the pews. And now they turn upon her own photograph, a large portrait hung over the mantelpiece, taken some years since when

fashions were not as they are now, and when her figure wanted its present fulness of beauty, and her eyes their depth and thoughtfulness.

She was a school-girl when she sat for that portrait. What clusters of memories haunt it ! Early rising and saucy chatter, and a hundred little gifts from mammy.

The small round clock on the mantelpiece ticks clearly. How familiar is the sound ! She will not hear it to-morrow : she will be thinking of this room, perhaps, and of her thoughts as she lay in it, and of her mother sorrowing. And Jack ! a gush of tenderness follows the thought of him. How dear, how very dear he is to her !

She thinks of the perfect happiness she has when with him, of his kisses, his promises, the magic of his smile and caress to awaken joy in her heart. She lies now with a soft smile on her face and her eyes fixed.

The sunny murmur of the bees comes up with the wind that lazily flaps the window-blind ; the heat is full of slumber, the clock ticks drowsily, and, worn out with inward fret and worry, Fan's eyelids droop and droop, her breathing grows deep and regular, and she falls fast asleep.

She wakes with a start, and looks at the clock—it is a quarter to five. She has slept above two hours, and she springs from the bed with a sudden alarm, frightened at she knows not what, but speedily steadies her mind. Her cheeks are flushed, and her eyes have the soft April light on them one sees in a baby's when awakened from a sleep.

As she smooths her hair she recalls what seems to her a dream, in which Ethel came into the room and stood beside the bed, and touched or watched her. Was it a dream ? Whether or not matters little.

She has other thoughts to occupy her, and since she means to leave the house at seven she had best change her dress now and prepare herself, and if her mother questions her, is not she going to drink tea at the Matthews's?

The fear of meeting her mother is strong upon her, because deception is a difficult vice to her candid nature, and she will scarcely be able to sit with her mother and not act and tell lies as fast as she can invent them. So she lingers in the bedroom until the dinner hour, and then goes downstairs, and walks into the dining-room where Mrs. Rogers is sitting.

The expression in mamma's eye is very freezing. She has a knitted shawl over her shoulders, and sits rigidly in her chair, with an open book in her lap.

She notices at once that Fanny has changed her dress, and says—

"Where have you been all the afternoon?"

"In my bedroom, and I have been asleep," Fanny answers, standing at the window with her back upon the room.

"Has Ethel come in yet?"

"I didn't know she was out."

"She went out at half-past three. I shan't wait dinner for her," says Mrs. Rogers pettishly.

There is a short silence, and Fan wonders what next will be said.

"I hope you have changed your mind about the Matthews, Fanny. It's against my wish that you go," mamma says.

"I am sorry to displease you. If I thought there was any harm in spending the evening with the Matthews's I should not go," answers Fanny, in a subdued voice, without turning her head.

"You know that it is not the Matthews's that I object to, but—but the people—the

person you may meet there," quavers Mrs. Rogers.

"He'll not be there," says Fan suddenly.

"Make your mind easy."

"How do you know?" cries Mrs. Rogers, sharply.

"I do know."

The servant comes in, and says, "Shall you wait for Miss Ethel, please?"

"Where is she? What is keeping her?" cries Mrs. Rogers; and she looks at the clock, and waits for Fanny to answer—but Fan has nothing to say. Mrs. Rogers loses her patience and calls out, "Bring up the dinner at once! bring it up at once;" and Charlotte goes away.

"Is Ethel asked to the Matthews's, too?" exclaims Mrs. Rogers, and a horrid idea seizes her that some intrigue is going forward, and that Ethel is in the secret, and serving Fan. "Where is Ethel, I say?" she cries out. "She's never unpunctual."

She ought to be home. Is she out on any errand? Didn't she tell you where she was going?"

"I haven't seen her since lunch," answers Fanny, made sulky by mamma's intemperate manner.

"Then what's keeping her?"

"I tell you I don't know, mamma. Don't you believe me?" replies Fan, stamping her foot and turning her angry eyes upon her mother.

"I'll not wait for her!" exclaims Mrs. Rogers, putting out her hand towards the bell-handle and suddenly remembering that she has given her orders. "I can't conceive what has come to you both. I don't feel at home any longer. Everything seems going wrong. You've utterly changed from the girl you used to be, and what does Ethel mean by stopping out in this manner? Has she tumbled into the sea? has she met Jenny Matthews and gone home with her



to wait for you? It's very improper conduct. It's not like her. So young a creature has no right to treat a woman of my age in this manner."

She rises chafing and goes excitedly to her chair at the table.

Fan thinks Ethel's absence odd. She has been hitherto too busy with her own thoughts to notice the thing clearly, now she begins to speculate. Her conclusion is that Ethel is purposely keeping out of the way, so as to avoid the overwhelming dénouement which the evening threatens. She is not keeping her promise. She was to have stayed at home and cheered and comforted dear auntie. Surely she is a cowardly, weak little thing. And with whom is she stopping? with the Matthews's? Fan sees no object that Ethel can gain by her absence. Let her spend the evening with whom she pleases, she'll have to return home; and better to brave

the storm by slow approaches than enter into its full fury on a sudden.

But Fanny cannot divulge her conjectures. She seats herself silently at the dinner-table, and pretends to eat the food that is put before her.

What a dinner it is ! Fan can hardly bear to look at her mother, and all the time Mrs. Rogers is glancing towards the window, and wondering where Ethel is, in a tone of voice that directly charges Fanny with knowing the cause of the girl's absence. Charlotte hangs about the table, and the hands of the clock move with wonderful slowness, and Mrs. Rogers sniffs and twitches and shakes her head, and Fan is as silent as a mummy, and keeps her eyes resolutely bent downwards, while her face is as white as the table-cloth. Outside, the waning afternoon gives promise of an evening of rare and cloudless beauty.

“ This is most extraordinary conduct on

Ethel's part," Mrs. Rogers says when dinner is nearly done. "Fanny, will you declare on your solemn word of honour that you don't know where she is?"

"You have asked me that a dozen times, and I have answered you," Fanny answers.

"But what am I to do? Shall I send Charlotte to the Matthews's to inquire if she is there? I hate this uncertainty. And am I to sit through a whole evening wondering and wondering what has become of her?"

"I am going to the Matthews's," replies Fanny, her heart beating violently; and she gives a great gulp as she adds, "if she's there I'll send word."

Mrs. Rogers looks as dissatisfied as her face can represent her, but no more is said, and presently Fan leaves the table and goes to her bedroom.

It would be impossible to define the

feelings that possess her. Her mind is so confused with conflicting passions and emotions that the hurrying contents of a boiling caldron could not be more indistinguishable and tumbling.

Jack plays no particular part on this mental stage. Her love is no powerful influence just now. I don't believe she thinks of it. She is under a promise and means to keep it; but the penalties exacted by the obligation—the heart-wrench, the deceit, the injury she does her mother, the bitterness of separation, the heavy doubts that encumber the future, and through all and over all the sense of helplessness engendered by the step she is about to take, and which will remove her from all the familiar moral supports of her life—these thoughts distract her. Her actions become mechanical.

Was ever yet a woman who fled from her home buoyantly, with no thought but

that of the bliss she is to partake with her lover ? At the last moment the feet become lead ; the ligatures of association which bind the heart to home and home-loves become steel, and have to be broken with passion and grief.

She puts on her hat slowly and languidly. She has some dim sort of notion that she may feel cold in the train, and looks about her for a shawl ; but checks herself, on remembering that her mother will see her go out, and that the shawl on so still and sultry an evening may excite her suspicion.

She can hardly realize her own action, and is bewildered to think how empty-handed, how meanly, how self-uncared for she is going forth to meet her sweetheart, and give herself to him.

Presently she is dressed and opens the door and listens, she does not know why. Her heart sounds in her ears, but all is still save the canary singing in rich clear notes

to the evening sunshine. She enters her mother's bedroom, puts the letter she has written on the toilette-table, and goes downstairs quietly and stops in the hall, and a wild and pitiful sense of shame and remorse and misery comes upon her, and she looks with pathetic beseeching eyes at the closed parlour-door.

If she goes in it is ten to one that she breaks her promise to Jack. The pause is a brief one, but a whole lifetime of emotion is crowded into it, and shakes and rends her.

No, she cannot look in upon her mother; her last action must not be a lie. With a sudden passion of mingled dread and determination she opens the hall-door, passes out, and walks vehemently through the garden.



## CHAPTER VI.

LOVE, AS THE WORLD GOES.

**N**OW that she is out of the house her courage revives. Her thoughts grow less complex ; probably the necessity of resolute and independent action clarifies her mind ; she sees with clearness the need and object of her present action, and her love gathers a new fire and influence from that perception.

It is a little past seven o'clock. She promised to meet Jack at the half-hour, and so walks briskly, having some distance to

go. There are two roads to the parade where they are to meet: one is round by the cliff, the other is at the back of the town, and she chooses this. She sometimes fancies that she will find Ethel on the parade, waiting to see her, to hear her last wishes and give her help she may want but cannot now foresee. Beyond all question her cousin's curious absence has reference to this elopement, and Fan thinks it ill-judged and incautious and cowardly.

But how can she take sagacious views of things in her present temper and excitement? what patience has she to reason problems into conclusions? She hurries along with her heart full of Jack, and hot tears close to her eyes. Whenever she thinks of her mother she hungrily snatches at the morsel of comfort which this reflection offers—that mamma's grief will be short-lived, because in less than a week, perhaps, they will be together again, hush-



ing resentment in the happiness of reunion. And what will the gossip of the people matter? She will be Jack's wife, and all her wishes and joy are bounded in that, and trouble with Jack as lover and husband must be impossible.

The broad, hot, sinking sunshine empurples the country at the back of the town; the sea in the distance, here and there streaking the sky over the roofs of the lower houses, is an exquisite blue; the windows flash ruddily and the wonderful crimson light gives an ideal distinctness and purity to all objects, and blends the whole scene into a clear tender picture, rich with colour and shadow.

The clocks in the town strike the half-hour as Fan reaches the parade. She stops at the corner, and looks along the smooth promenade. There is an old gentleman reading on a near bench: the bench next to that is occupied by some ladies: a few

nursemaids saunter along, followed or preceded by children ; other persons lounge or sit in the distance, but there is no sign of Jack.

A brief irritation comes upon her and passes, and is followed by a chill. He ought to be here ! she thinks, and looks blankly along the parade. She had expected to find him waiting, glancing eagerly from side to side, when she turned the corner ; and reckoned upon his glad smile and the impassioned grasp of his hand, and the tender welcome greeting to console her for the grief of the day, for the heartache that she carries with her. She sends a piercing glance at the people in the distance. But he is not of them. Oh, she would know him quickly enough : not a movement of his but is as familiar to her as love and memory can make it. She crosses to the railing that guards the parade from the sheer edge of the cliff, and

stands there. The sea is a space of calm and lovely blue, the creaming breakers purr stealthily among the rocks, which make one giddy to look down on ; yonder is the white pier, an exquisitely softened outline, with the spars of some vessels flushed with the crimson sunshine' burning against the deep azure of the eastern sky.

What is keeping him ? Has Ethel to do with his absence ? The question brings a great heat into her face ; but she beats back the senseless thought, for how could Ethel detain him ? Is not she their friend ? what false part could she play in a drama of love so deep and honest and earnest as the one in which Fanny and Jack are acting ?

But why does not he come ? Hark ! there is the pier clock ringing the quarter to eight. They were to meet at half-past seven—here—where she stands now. Why, she is bewildered. Has she mistaken the

day, the hour, the place ? No, this day is the day : this evening the time ; he ought to be here !

She bids herself be patient. Something has happened that will account for his delay ; something that will amply satisfy her, and most abundantly vindicate him. What can be the cause ? ah, she must wait. Perhaps he is hurrying to meet her now ; or—is he ill ? it is almost a relief to think that he is ill. She has not seen him since yesterday. What shall she do ?

Strollers pass her, and return and pass again. The nursemaids wheel the babies home, and more people saunter upon the parade. Out upon the sea the shadows deepen, and a light springs up in the east, and yonder is the red light burning upon the pier.

Ding-dong, eight o'clock ! Good God ! The strokes on the bell beat on Fanny's brain ; she grows wild with dread and

anger and bitter amazement. The people begin to notice her standing there ; and yet she is rooted to the spot : she dare not leave : how can she leave ? She knows not which way he may come.

By this time mamma may have found her letter !

She makes a singular picture, standing there rigidly erect, her hand upon the iron railing, her large dark eyes staring wildly down the parade, her lips hard set. The train they are to go by leaves at a quarter to nine.

What shall she do ? This is the question made maddening by reiteration. She cannot answer herself : her brain is in a whirl ; for sometimes the sense of an unendurable insult is upon her, and her spirit leaps up fiercely to the thoughts of it ; and then a feeling of exquisite misery, of betrayal, of deception, of cruel, cowardly deception, presses down upon her heart and turns her

sick and giddy, and then her instincts fight madly for the dear life of her love and hope and confidence. He *must* be ill, she thinks. He is true to me, and I am wronging him ! But oh ! what bitterness is packed into that waiting and watching ! What bitterness—what anguish—wrecking all sense of dignity, prostrating and trampling upon pride !

For three-quarters of an hour she waits for him. When a quarter-past eight strikes she walks forward, and as she goes she is followed by the eyes of a good many who have been watching her and wondering for whom the handsome girl is waiting.

She is sure he will not come now. She means to call at his lodgings and ask if he is ill, and then go home. But she follows the road he would take, so that should he, even at this late hour, be coming to meet her, they cannot miss each other.

It grows dark quickly when the sun has

gone down behind the level land beyond the bay. Lights are kindling out at sea, there are bright stars throbbing in the east, and the moon shines fairly over the great white cliffs where the North Foreland is. Many people are abroad, enjoying the wonderful calm and sweetness of the evening. The band is playing down by the pier, and the music is a pretty sound in the distance.

Fan passes the Matthews's house, but she does not look at it as she goes by—she has eyes for nothing but the show that is enacting in her mind. Every fibre in her tingles, her heart seems on fire, her eyes shine with the insulted passion that rages in her—for the sense of insult is the predominating influence.

She hopes, but cannot believe, that he is ill; she hopes, but cannot believe, that some—that any—cause but infidelity is the reason of his absence. Her instincts are

furious and defy her wishes ; she walks swiftly onwards, gains the house at which Jack lodges, and knocks.

"Is Mr. Huntley in?" she asks the servant.

"No, miss."

Fan's throat is so dry and burning that the words rend and tear her to utter. Before she can ask another question the girl says—

"He's gone away, miss."

"Away—where?"

"To London."

She swallows the shriek of rage and pain that comes right out of her heart, and stares down the passage and turns away, but looks back to say,

"How do you know he has gone to London?"

"He took his bag with him, and paid for his lodging, and said he shouldn't want his rooms again," says the servant, a heavy



country girl who pays no heed to Fan's manner, and stares over her head from the doorstep at the prospect.

"Was he sent for? Did anybody call for him?"

"A young lady was with him this afternoon. Miss Saunders her name were. I let her in, miss. They went out together. I think myself he's took her with him to London," and the girl grins as if she sees a piece of humour somewhere out yonder where the pier is.

Fanny goes away as in a dream. Amaze-ment deep and bewildering interposes to shield her heart from the shock which must come with perception of the truth. She walks to the left, stops and looks around her, and presses her hand to her head, and takes the road home.

At the bottom of the hill she stops again to look back at the house, to steady, perhaps, with the sight of some object having

association with her bewilderment, the reel and vibration of her moral being. Now, as she stops, the truth flashes broadly upon her, but it comes with an aspect so incredible that still the bitterness she is to feel presently is qualified by astonishment.

She presses forwards through the crowds which fill the High Street. This is the hour when the smack apprentices come out of their vessels, and stand in lumps of tar and blanket about the market-place, and drive a trade in coarse jokes with the wenches who are abroad on errands, or in idleness.

It is a busy hour for the shops, which are filled with customers, even as the boys outside wait to rattle the shutters in their places. The lodging-house folk rush wildly about for their lodgers' suppers, a smell of corduroy and black tobacco rises strong and warm; one longs for a thunderstorm to clear the streets of the rabble, and for a

gale of wind to cleanse the atmosphere of the rabble's odours.

Fan walks blindly and vehemently. She had forgotten the existence of this permanent evening crowd, or would have escaped it by another turning. But she soon reaches the purer air of the hill-top, and is presently alone with the silver moon shining sweetly in front of her and the smell of the fields in her nostrils.

By this time she has gathered the meaning of the thing that has happened ; that is, she knows that Jack has jilted her for Ethel, that Ethel has deceived her with infamous cunning, and is gone with the man whom Fan was to have married. But why and how it has happened she does not understand, nor has she the power to inquire.

The shock is over, it might have transformed her—God knows it was the bitterest that could be imagined or designed. It

has left her cold and resolute, and as she nears her mother's house she is marshalling her moral forces, and ordering her mind, and determining on a course of action as astonishing as the wrong that has been done her.

Has her mother found her letter? She doesn't care. She is in the temper to go through any ordeal now. There is no heat in her, no leaping passions; the swinging feverish gait has settled into a steady determined walk; her face is composed, her lips firm, her eyes look right ahead, no longer seek the ground nor flash madly from side to side: she is a figure of iron for the nonce; that is the effect wrought on her by this sudden tearing away of a dear and sweet love from her heart.

It is dark now: the last lingering flush of sunset has faded out of the western sky, the stars are beaming all around the horizon, and the moon rides high and clear. The garden is in shadow, and Fan, as she enters

it, sees that the parlour blind is drawn, and the lamp lighted.

She reaches the hall door, turns the handle, and enters. The parlour door is closed. If Mrs. Rogers is within, then certainly she does not hear her daughter's footsteps ; the door remains shut, and Fanny goes upstairs. Her first action is to step into her mother's bedroom, and take the letter she placed on the toilette-table ; she then crosses to her own bedroom, lights a candle, and seats herself before her writing-case. The hand with which she grasps the pen is perfectly steady : she reflects a moment, and then writes :—

“ DEAR COLONEL SWAYNE,

“ I have changed my mind, and will tell you why if you will come down and see me.

“ Yours sincerely,

“ F. ROGERS.”

She directs the envelope, and pulls out her purse for a postage stamp ; she finds the stamp, but her eyes come back to the purse ; she searches it, then buries her hand in her pocket, turns the purse upside down, takes the candle, and looks over the bed, the floor.

What has she lost ? The ring Jack gave her. She spends five minutes in a fruitless search, is then persuaded that she has dropped it out of doors, and then all the bitterness and misery in her soul rise up : she hates and loathes the ring ; she hates and loathes the giver of it ; if she had found the ring she would have ground it under foot, she would have flung it into the grate, so its loss saves her an outbreak of burning scorn.

She takes the candle and the letter to Colonel Swayne, and goes downstairs quietly to the kitchen.

“Charlotte,” she calls.

"Yes, miss," says the girl, and she comes out with some work in her hand.

"Take this letter to the post at once. It must go to-night. Has Miss Saunders come in?"

"No, miss."

"Make haste with that letter."

She waits until Charlotte puts on her bonnet, and then walks slowly and painfully to the dining-room.

Mrs. Rogers sits with her knitted wrapper over her, near the table, reading. Her cold has made her deaf; she does not look up when Fanny enters, and the girl stands some moments watching her, before Mrs. Rogers turns her head. Imagining that Fanny is spending the evening at the Matthews's, mamma is alarmed to behold her: she stares, tosses the book on to the table, and calls out:

"What is the matter? What brings you home? Where is Ethel?"

Fan waits a moment, and then says in a low voice—

“Don’t ask me questions. I have a great deal to tell you. You must be patient and listen to me. Ethel is quite well.”

She stops, and grapples the table. Mamma peers at her with frightened eyes under the lamp.

“I meant to have left home to-night,” Fanny goes on speaking slowly and distinctly, as she is obliged to speak by the prodigious effort it costs her to deliver her words. “I meant to have eloped with Mr. Huntley. We were to have been married to-morrow morning in London. I left home to meet him . . . but I have come back again to you . . . I have come back again, mamma.”

She smiles a sickly smile, holding to the table for support.

Mrs. Rogers utters a cry, and starts out of her chair.



“Darling, you thought better of it? Darling, you hadn’t the heart to leave your poor mother! You were tempted by him—say it, darling!—but your good angel prevailed, and you came back to me?”

She holds out her arms tottering as she stands; but Fan remains motionless. The hurry and passion of her full mind permits her no pause to dwell upon this so very different reception from what she had expected. She makes a gesture with her hand.

“He has deceived me, mamma. He did not meet me. I waited three quarters of an hour for him, and then went to his lodging, and the servant told me he had eloped with Ethel.”

She thought it would take her a long time to tell the story; but it is all told now, and she breathes fiercely and quickly, as though mad to think that such a tale of suffering should be so brief.

Mrs. Rogers remains standing with a stupefied face, then sinks back in her arm-chair, and stares without a word. What she hears is really and truly more than her mind can receive. The truth pieces itself bit by bit : the position in which her child has placed herself ; the insult she has received ; the deceit and folly of Ethel's conduct. She is too shocked and astounded to be angry ; words rush into her mouth, and explode in harmless unintelligible articulations. Meanwhile Fanny stands supporting herself by the table ; if she lets go her hold she will fall and swoon.

"You must not reproach me," she says faintly. "I am heavily punished."

Mrs. Rogers puts her hand to her eyes.

"Did you think of *me*?" she cries. "What should I have done to-night had you not come home? You have not been to the Matthews's then? he did not meet you, you say? . . . Ethel has gone off

with him !” she shakes her head and looks up bewildered.

If Fan had the power to take a step she would fall at her mother’s feet. The pale face, the love that struggled out through the first indescribable shock of feeling, come home to her and sharpen and poison the arrows of remorse and humiliation. Her eyes are tortured with tears which will not flow : they look out brightly and feverishly, her face is heated by her blood to scarlet, and her temples beat madly.

“What am I to do ?” her mother cries out presently. “He has taken Ethel—she is my sister’s child—how am I to save her ?” and she half rises from her chair and looks wildly around the room. Her eyes light upon Fanny : she sees that the girl is using all the force that is in her to command herself from the hysteria that is threatened in her eyes : and hastens to the sideboard and puts some brandy to her lips.

The draught is well-timed. Fan leans upon her mother's arm and goes to an arm-chair and sinks like a dying person into it.

"I don't deserve your love, mammy. I meant to have behaved wickedly—but . . . but you have been rather harsh. You would never let me see him . . . I had written to say that it was your severity that drove me into eloping with him."

She pulls out the letter she had addressed to her mother and turns it about in her fingers vacantly without offering it. Mrs. Rogers takes it out of her hand, reads it, lets it drop on the floor, covers her face with her hands and bursts into tears.

"I couldn't help being harsh," she sobs. "I never liked him. I never wanted you to see him. Had you judged him truly you would have been spared this dreadful trouble. He is a heartless vicious creature. Thank God his influence over you has

ceased—you know him now for what he is. Oh, my poor child, how shamefully he has tricked you! And Ethel! what am I to do? It is too late to save her. They have started by this time—*imagine* it! What wickedness! what folly!”

She groans and dashes herself about. She can't yet see that Ethel is an accomplished little villain, profoundly capable of taking care of herself. She thinks that the girl has disgraced herself, that she will come back alone, ruined in name and so forth. Of course she is fond of the little creature. Ethel has always been attentive enough to her and well behaved, they have lived together a good many years, and association steps in and binds her to her dead sister's child.

Fan has nothing to say. She sits with her eyes fixed downwards while her mother raves about Ethel, crying out that it is death to her to remain idle whilst there is

yet time to save the girl, and then correcting herself and exclaiming that she can't save Ethel, that she must trust to the wretch's honour to marry her, that Ethel's reputation would be ruined for life were they to be separated now.

The furious rage that first moved Fanny against Ethel has passed. She listens to her mother, but takes no account of her words, as they refer to Ethel ; she thinks of Jack, of the atrocious trick he has played her, the inexplicable insult he has put upon her. Like flashes of light memories of the past break upon her : his love, his words, his actions, his hopes, the eagerness with which he planned the elopement, the eloquence with which he advocated it and by which he prevailed over her scruples and fears. She looks wildly and vacantly at her mother as she talks and groans. She cannot believe in what has happened. Will it yet prove false ? will not Ethel re-

turn? Can she take the servant's word that they left together? He was true as steel to her, surely: as true as love itself: what has transformed him in an hour?

But the irresistible issue of it all comes back again and again to her, shattering her theories as it comes. Her face turns ashen pale: she sets her teeth tightly and swallows the cries her heart would force from her, while her mother dwells on Ethel and asks how she is to save her.

All this is an outbreak that must pass. Mrs. Rogers grows calmer, for presently a deep sense of thankfulness that her child is spared to her, fills her heart; and in a fit of impulse she takes Fanny in her arms, kisses her wildly, sobs passionately over her, and then goes back to her chair tranquillized.

Something, too, of that stubbornness of will which enabled Fanny to cope with the

first amazing confrontment of her trial, is coming back to her. These love-blows don't go so deep as the sufferers imagine. It would astonish people to count the number of broken hearts that become whole again and healthy. It is the personal insult of being jilted that hurts one most. It is the laceration of one's *amour propre* that makes the pain. Surely it is only in novels that women betrayed by their sweet-hearts take to their beds, and turn into waxen figures and expire amid pathetic whispers. Who can't put his hand upon a score of girls who have loved men who have dropped them, and who are as well in health and blooming in face, and giddy in costume, and sprightly in spirits as they were before they met the wretches who filled them with vain hopes?

"Mamma," Fanny says, "I have written to Colonel Swayne. I have asked him to come and see me."



Mamma's capacity of being surprised is pretty well exhausted by this time. Her thoughts are chiefly concerned with Ethel, over whom she is fretting and groaning in spirit and praying silent prayers that Mr. Huntley will marry her, and so on.

"Why have you written?" she answers.  
"Why do you want to see him?"

"I will marry him if he'll make me his wife—if he *can* make me his wife after he has heard my story," Fanny says in a subdued voice, pressing her locked fingers tightly.

"But will you tell him this dreadful story? Will you own that you loved this wretched young man, and would have eloped with him had he met you?" cries Mrs. Rogers, her strict sense of propriety coming vehemently to the front.

"He shall know exactly what I have done, and what I mean to do." And Fanny smiles a white painful smile as she adds,

"I think he loves me too well to mind about this empty silly business."

The adjectives are delivered with an emphasis of bitter scorn; as she utters them she feels her humiliation and bites her lips fiercely.

Mrs. Rogers cannot argue. She shakes her head and speaks of Ethel.

"Where will he take her? She has no clothes! Where will they be married? will it be a true marriage? What dreadful wickedness! what heartless folly! What train did they leave by? when will they reach London?" And then again comes the ghastly question, "Where will he take her?"

Fanny rises in flames. It maddens her to hear her mother refer to the little traitor with any suggestion of solicitude in her manner.

She quells and terrifies Mrs. Rogers with the impetuous torrent of rage and hate she

pours out. The storm is full of electricity whilst it lasts : there is thunder and lightning in every look and word ; but it passes on a sudden ; the poor girl abandons herself to cruel, miserable despair, and breaks into the most melancholy doleful weeping, swaying herself as though she suffered physical torture, and blinded by tears that seam her face like molten lead.

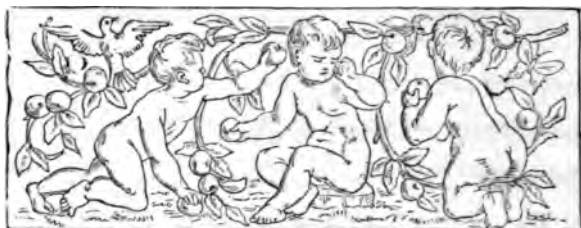
Well, she is better when the outburst is over. Her tears have taken a weight off her brain, and the confession of her misery, her love, her abasement, eases her heart as most confessions will.

“Mamma,” she says, with a quivering voice, “let this thing be dead between us. It is a horrible experience ; but I can and will bear it if you will help me by not speaking of it. I shall feel grateful for it by-and-by, I dare say, when I am calmer and can think of him as a heartless man, for whom I was ready to make a dreadful

sacrifice of my love for you and our old home. I ought to go down on my knees and thank God for saving me from him . . . I believed in him . . . I thought I was very dear to him . . . I loved him very, very much . . . "

What can she add? She presses her cheek against the back of the chair and sobs with her handkerchief over her eyes; and poor Mrs. Rogers sobs in concert, and all the kind reassuring things she can invent come quivering out of her mouth.

Outside the silver moon looks peacefully down. It is half-past nine. By this time Fan should have been very close to London with Jack at her side.



## CHAPTER VII.

JENNY MATTHEWS CALLS.

**J**ANNY does not sleep very well that night. Mamma sees her into bed, hangs about her, and fondles her and forgives her, and then leaves her to her own thoughts, and to watch the moon-shine until it sidles off the window.

There is enough fever in her moral being to make her imagination wonderfully active and fantastic. Her great astonishment is gone now: she looks upon Jack and Ethel as a traitorous unholy pair, who for some

inscrutable reason have been engaged in deceiving her ever since she first listened to the impostor.

Of course she recollects the sweet and charming things he said to her ; his ogles, his whispers, and the rest of the tricks with which these good-looking conjurors divert female audiences ; nothing in her past that has reference to him but is remembered by her.

She has thought little of her letter to Colonel Swayne. It is recalled to her in the morning by the postman's knock. She hardly knows whether to feel glad or sorry that she sent it. The fact is, she has exhausted her stock of feeling, and can only think negatively. If he comes in obedience to her summons, she will tell him her story, and if he proposes again she will accept him.

This will make amends to mamma ; besides, she likes him very well ; he is an

amiable good creature, and if he can't make her as happy as Another could have made her, she will make *him* happy at all events, and that will be a pleasure, and an honest one.

Now she thinks of the ring Jack gave her, and pulls out her purse and searches for it. Then she looks under the bed and all over the floor, and shakes her dress that is hanging up, and pauses to think how and when she could have lost it. She can't remember when she last took notice that it was in her purse. Yesterday was it, or the day before? She is greatly puzzled and proceeds thoughtfully with her toilette.

Her face looks very pale under the masses of hair she brushes down on either side of it. The merry roguish look has gone out of her eyes, and taken with it something of the youthfulness of her expression; but, all the same, she is a handsome creature :

her full arms are as white as ivory, her neck gleams like snow through the bronze of her hair, she holds herself very upright and her dark eyes look proudly back from the toilet-glass, and prove that if her spirit is bruised it is not broken yet.

She is still at her toilette when mamma pushes open the door and comes in. She has just got out of bed and is in her dressing-gown, and holds out a letter with as sad and concerned a face upon her as Fan remembers ever having seen. The letter is on satin note-paper well-scented; the handwriting is thin and delicate, and Fan knows whom the missive is from before she looks at the signature.

“You’re quite right!” cries Mrs. Rogers. “They’ve gone off together! I can only pray that he will marry her this morning. There’s nothing left to hope for.”


Fanny looks at the letter as if it were



a snake; takes it with a passionate gesture, and reads :

“ MY DEAREST AUNTIE,

“ By the time you receive this letter I shall be in London, and before the morning is gone I shall be my darling Jack’s wife. I know that my absence all night will cause you great anxiety and suspense ; and I earnestly ask pardon for what I am doing. I love Jack devotedly, and I know he adores me, and our *only* reason for going away secretly was our fear that you would never sanction our marriage, on account of your prejudice against Jack. Dear Fanny will be a little upset I fear, because Jack made her believe he loved her so as to conceal the true state of things from you. But she will soon forget the vexation our little stratagem has caused her, and I hope will meet with one whose love will be worthy of the beautiful



qualities with which her character is adorned.

“ Believe me, dear auntie,

“ Your loving niece,

“ ETHEL.

“ P.S. I will send full directions where my things are to be forwarded. Jack talks of taking me to his father. I shall try hard to get the old gentleman’s *blessing*.”

As Fan finishes this bloodless letter it is a sight to see the fire in her eyes, the wonderful scorn that flashes into her face.

“ She is a liar !” she says in a low voice, but filled with the concentrated essence of her feelings at this moment. “ Her letter is a lie from beginning to end. He *did* love me—she knows it ! and he loves me still, and if he did not meet me last night I have to thank Ethel for it. Where

is the ring he gave me? I begin to see . . .”

She stops, and then proceeds in a higher key, which she delivers with the note of a half-suppressed shriek.

“Did she steal my ring from me? She was with him, on my behalf, day after day! When you have prevented me from meeting him she has taken messages for me: she has called upon him at his lodgings. Oh, it is quite plain now! she has lied about me to him. She has told him I was false to him, and he believed her—the fool!”

She stamps her foot and actually laughs, and I can assure you the combination of gesture and sound so cramful of scorn, disgust, and passion, produces an effect in a high degree melodramatic and startling.

“My dear,” exclaims Mrs. Rogers, laying a somewhat nervous hand upon Fanny’s

arm, "pray calm yourself. Pray remember this is past. Be sure he could not love you with any sincerity if he permitted Ethel to deceive him. Cannot a man judge for himself? If he had loved you as you think, depend upon it, Fanny, he would not give you up on the mere assertion of a girl whom he *must* have known was in love with him herself. It is a happy release, dear, for you. You are spared to be my comfort after all."

And the poor lady throws her arms round Fan's neck, and has a good cry on her bosom.

"She must have written that letter here," Fan says presently, "and posted it when she went to the station with him. That proves they had agreed to elope," and she stands lost in amazed thought.

Mrs. Rogers goes to the door, and says, "Cheer up, my dear. You'll be laughing at this trouble some of these days. We are

all tricked in life one way or another : and very often," she says, "it is our children who trick us the worst." And she shakes her head, and smiles, and looks sad all at once, and leaves the room.

Fanny dresses herself, and goes downstairs. She feels jaded and worn : for what tires the body more than emotional excitement ? Half an hour's passion is a good deal more wearying than an hour's digging. Her thoughts settle upon Colonel Swayne, and she wonders if he will come.

That was a strange abrupt letter she wrote him. She would have acted more wisely, she thinks, had she waited a while before writing ; but everything happens for the best : it is a hard philosophy to learn, but a most comforting one when got. Fanny feels the force of it as her thoughts wander from the Colonel to the events of yesterday. How can she complain of the deceit put

upon her by Jack and Ethel when she herself was ready to deceive her mother in as cruel a way? Mamma felt that truth just now, and it came hard home to Fan when she uttered it.

Mamma has forgiven her : mamma loves her and blesses her ; Fan does not forgive Jack : he is never likely to get *her* blessing. Yet the deceit upon mamma was greater than the deceit upon Fanny. Jack is not the culprit that Fanny is. So let her chafe and grieve as she will, she can't but feel that a greater blessing has befallen her than she deserves : that she has discovered a true friend and a false one, and that the only harm Jack's jilting will do her, will be to infuse some cynicism in her general estimate of mankind.

When mamma meets her at breakfast her manner is wonderfully cordial and gentle. She is quite womanly as a tactician, and says nothing about Ethel, though

she is thinking of her all the time. I don't think she feels that Fanny has been *insulted* by Jack's infidelity. I don't think she lays, in her own mind, very much stress upon Ethel's deceitfulness. What concerns her largely, I may say wholly, is that her daughter is preserved from the clutches of a rogue whom she despises. It is bad enough, indeed, that Ethel should be his victim, and she can only hope, etc., etc. ; but she has sympathy enough with Fanny's state of mind to feel that any concerned reference to her niece would be cruel and foolish ; and so she smothers her worry and delivers kindly homilies on the instability of human things, and says and does whatever her tender heart can suggest to console Fanny for her heavy trial and mortification.

"Mammy," says Fan, "if Colonel Swayne should come you will let me see him alone,

will you, please? I should not be able to talk to him before you."

"But, my dear child, what do you mean to say to him?"

"Why," cries Fanny, flushing up, "I shall tell him that I loved Mr. Huntley, and that he deceived me; that I loved him, but that I *hate* him now, and hate myself more for ever having loved him."

She pauses, and adds in a lower key, "I shall tell him that I did myself a wrong when I refused his offer, and that if he still loves me after what I have told him I will be his wife."

Mrs. Rogers looks as if she were about to object violently, but quite suddenly changes her mind, and exclaims,—

"Perhaps you are right, my dear. I hope he will not mistake your meaning. It's a delicate undertaking. And won't it look rather—rather, my dear, as if you



were *determined* to be married one way or another?"

Fanny turns scarlet, and answers excitedly,—

"Don't make such suggestions, mamma. It's too late. He *cannot* mistake me. If he does he will be worse than Mr. Huntley."

She delivers this with great violence, whereupon Mrs. Rogers tells her that her wish from the beginning was that she should be Colonel Swayne's wife; that she ardently hopes he will not misapprehend the impulse under which Fanny wrote to him; that on reflection she is quite sure he will not, for few men that ever she met were more thoroughly gentlemanly in tone and feeling; and so she goes on awhile, and then stops to think of Ethel. After all, that must be her serious trouble for the present. Fanny at all events is safe; but such is Mrs. Rogers's mean opinion of Jack that her

imagination places no limit to the possibility of wrong-doing of which she holds him capable.

The morning passes quickly and quietly. Mrs. Rogers is well of her cold, and turns to her sewing-machine, and Fan feels a kind of dull but genuine pleasure in being with her. She tries to read, but that is hopeless: she is too pre-occupied to do more than stare out of window and answer absently the questions Mrs. Rogers from time to time sends at her over the top of her sewing-machine.

A little before one she hears steps coming along the garden, and draws away from the window. Jenny Matthews, brilliant in colours, flashes by, and aims excitedly at the door, and raps loudly.

"Shall we be out to her?" Fan exclaims, turning pale.

"No, she may have some news—but you

need not meet her," answers Mrs. Rogers, getting up.

"Not a word, mamma, about Mr. Huntley and me. If Jenny is told the story it will go all over the town."

"I shall only listen—I shan't talk," replies Mrs. Rogers. "Is it likely I should talk?" she cries, and she goes out as Charlotte opens the door.

Jenny has not called to give news but get it. She dashes out of her chair at Mrs. Rogers in her impetuous way, and calls out—

"Oh, Mrs. Rogers, do you know that Johnny Huntley has left the town in a most extraordinary manner without having given us the least idea that he was going? He was to have spent the evening with us yesterday, and we waited and waited for him and then gave him up; and just now I went to his lodgings, meaning to rate him soundly for his rudeness; and what do you

think? He has gone away, and the servant says with a young lady, and she declares her name is Miss Saunders."

And Jenny stares with her little eyes, and twists her face into a note of interrogation.

"It's quite true!" cries Mrs. Rogers, smiting her dress. "He has eloped with Ethel. He is a wicked wretch, and I thank God I always hated him."

"Well, I'm *astonished*! Eloped with Miss Saunders! Why, I thought he was head over ears in love with your daughter!" bursts out Jenny, standing on tiptoe in her excitement.

"Thank heaven, no! it's Ethel," says Mrs. Rogers, wildly. "But where has he taken her? Do you know, Miss Matthews? Where does he live? She believes he will marry her this morning—but, supposing he doesn't? supposing he doesn't? I say. Can't I save her? What

am I to do?" and she falls into a chair and wriggles upon it.

"But what does your daughter say? Isn't *she* flabbergasted?" exclaims Jenny, hanging on with a gossip's affection to the sentimental aspect of the affair.

"Disgusted, do you mean? She *hates* him. Why, my daughter's aspirations are a *little* higher than this stockbroker's son," says the poor woman, trying to toss her head.

"It's quite incredible. Mamma will never believe it," cries Jenny. "We were all so sure that he was in love with Fanny Rogers. In fact we were all sure that she was quite sure herself. I don't understand it at all. Johnny gone off with Ethel Saunders? It is the last thing to dream of. *What* an idea!" and she turns it over, and feasts upon it, and garnishes it, and relishes it.

"But will you tell me, my dear, what I

am to do?" says Mrs. Rogers, warmly. "This young man is your friend. He has stolen my niece away. She has lived with me a great number of years, and has no relative but me to look to. I can't pursue them. And if I could what good would it serve? He is a sneaking fellow to steal into my house and wrong me as he has done. Has the villain honour enough to make good his promise to my deluded niece? Will he marry her?"

She shrieks all this out, and wags her head at Jenny as she waits for her reply.

"Marry her? yes, can you doubt it, Mrs. Rogers? Of course he'll marry her this very morning. Do you think she won't *make* him?"

"Well, I hope she will, I hope she will."

"What *I* think is, he's not to blame more than she is. She knew there was love-making going on between Johnny and

your daughter, and she stood by and let it go on to deceive us all. Isn't she one to take care of herself? I rather think she is!" and she laughs rather scornfully. "It's my belief that she's basely deceived Fanny, and if I meet your daughter I'll ask her plump. They *were* in love with each other—I mean Johnny and your daughter. Wasn't he talking about her the other day as if she were a goddess, and rather pooh-poohing Miss Saunders? What does the fool mean by such conduct? Has he run mad? I'm positive he's gone off with the wrong girl. It's a chapter in a novel, that's what it is, but it's more wonderful and thrilling because it's true. Mamma will never believe it—never."

"Well, there, it's happened!" cries Mrs. Rogers, extending her hands. "It's a shameful, disgraceful trick, and we ought never to have known him."

"I am sure I am very sorry for introducing

him to you," says Jenny, making up a contrite face. "We've known him a good many years. He's rather gentlemanly and good-looking. I never thought there was any harm in him."

"I never thought him gentlemanly," exclaims Mrs. Rogers, angrily. "I kept him out of the house when I found—found—I mean I never liked him, and never wanted to see him," she blunders out, catching herself up in time to save the confession that would involve Fanny.

Jenny grows a little frightened by Mrs. Rogers's temper, and fidgets with her gloves and looks as concerned as she can. *She* sees no particular enormity in the elopement—as an elopement. On the contrary, she looks upon eloping as a rather cool and tranquil mode of getting married in the dog-days, very romantic, not inelegant, and decidedly economical. Her wonder is that Johnny should have eloped with Ethel.



"Is your daughter at home, Mrs. Rogers?" she asks.

"Yes; but—but she is not very well," Mrs. Rogers answers, with a childish look of annoyance, embarrassment, and eagerness on her face which tells exactly what she thinks she conceals.

"I am very sorry; I hope she is not upset by—by the loss of her cousin," says Jenny, not maliciously; on the contrary, being pretty sure that Fanny has been jilted, she is heartily sorry for her.

Who wouldn't be upset by such behaviour?" exclaims Mrs. Rogers. "I have all along been of opinion that Mr. Huntley is no gentleman, and I am not to be surprised by his behaviour. But why didn't Ethel tell me she was in love with the man? I'd have consented to their marriage, much as I dislike him. I'd have taken the whole trouble and expense of it upon myself rather than this dreadful bit

of scandal should have come upon us. There was no occasion for her to elope, she could have married him respectably. Pray God——” and out comes the old hope.

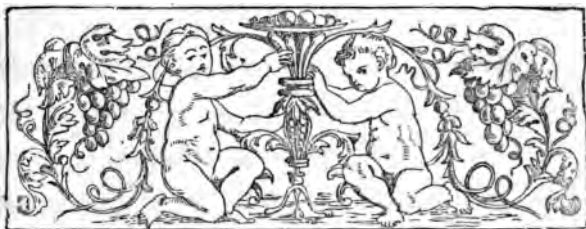
Jenny can't in decency prolong her visit. But before she goes she does her little good-natured best to ease Mrs. Rogers of her doubts of Jack's honourable intentions. She says she wishes she was as sure of getting ten thousand a year as she is that they are married, now—that they are man and wife even as she is talking.

Where will they get married?

Why, a registrar will marry them, won't he? She doesn't know much about licences and certificates, and that sort of thing, but she does know that people can get married when they want in this country, and that it only means taking an oath and paying some money. Jack is more credulous and stupid than wicked. He means no harm,

and he has run off with Ethel—she can't guess why: at least, she *can* guess, but she's not going to express her private opinions, but she would if Ethel were present—ah, that she would! and he'll make her his wife, and she hopes they'll be happy. If she were Mrs. Rogers she wouldn't fret at all. Everything is certain to come right.

“Give my dear love to Fanny,” she says, and amiably salutes Mrs. Rogers's cheek, and goes away to give the news to her mamma.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE COLONEL ARRIVES.

**I**T is half-past four o'clock in the afternoon, and Fanny is in her bedroom lying down. This time yesterday she was asleep: she is wide awake now, with a much better excuse for sleeping than she had yesterday. She has been saved by an accident from marrying an insincere rascal, and the rescue should fill her with thanksgiving, and dispose her to rest and peace.

But human nature is mightily perverse,

and instead of feeling grateful for what has happened, Fanny maddens and weeps internally over the wrong and indignity done her, as though it were a heavy blow instead of a stroke of good fortune.

She turns her dark eyes about the room, and everything she sees reminds her of what her hopes were yesterday. She hates Ethel fiercely. Her resentment against the conquering yellow-haired witch, who carried off the handsome hero with wonderful art and wickedness, is immense. She is quite sure that Ethel has tricked her by some odiously mean stratagem. Where is her ring? Did Ethel steal it? did she use it to illustrate a lie? Very likely. But what a weak, mean, credulous idiot must Jack be to swallow a lie on the first hearing, and act upon it! It seems impossible that he could have done this. He must have been in love with Ethel. Then Fan's brain goes to work to recall the things he said to her,

and his actions, and his kisses, and to reconcile them, if she can, with the hypocrisy of his dealings with her.

Thus thinking she puts herself into a passion, and bounds off the bed in her impulse of bitter indignation, and stands a glowing, dishevelled, fiery-eyed figure in the middle of the room.

At this moment she hears mamma's hasty footsteps bumping upstairs, and in comes Mrs. Rogers, her breath almost spent with running, and cries out in a broken, faltering whisper, "Colonel Swayne is downstairs."

Fan's passion drops from her with the quite new direction this announcement gives to her thoughts. She seems intensely troubled for a moment or two, then recollects herself with a fine effort, and turns to the looking-glass and pulls her hair into some kind of order.

"My dear," quavers Mrs. Rogers at her

ear, "be very careful in what you say. Don't compromise yourself by *too* much frankness. He won't require it—it'll embarrass him. How quickly he has answered your letter! he must have taken the first train he could catch."

And she looks at her daughter in the glass with earnest, anxious affection.

"Colonel Swayne's in the drawing-room, mum," says Charlotte, poking her head in.

Fan's hands drop, and she stands awhile before the looking-glass lost in thought.

"Mamma," she says, "I must see him alone. I could not speak to him before you. I think I shall find out what to say and do. I shall not withdraw the meaning I put into my letter to him; and if he chooses to marry me after what has happened he may."

She goes to the door, leaving mamma

awestruck and silent by her commanding manner.

She lingers in the hall, while mamma hangs over the banister to hear her go into the drawing-room. She is more surprised by the Colonel's rapid reply to her letter, than she dares for her nerves' sake admit to herself. It is lucky for her that her reveries have heated her against Jack, for they have put her into the temper to act with audacity and indifference to results.

She gives her head a toss, pushes open the door, and walks in. The Colonel stands with his hat in his hand, looking intently in the direction of the door. The heat and the journey and his nervousness have made him rather pale, but his amiable smile salutes her as she enters, and his kind eyes kindle as he puts his hat down, and advances towards her with both hands outstretched.



“You see I have lost no time in obeying your summons,” he says gently, looking earnestly at her, and evidently struck with the expression of trouble her face wears, and which has no reference to the embarrassment of this meeting.

“I wanted to see you. I have a good deal—no, but something, to say, and I thought it better to meet you face to face, than write down the story in a letter,” she answers ; and then she releases her hands, and turns away as though to look for a chair, but in reality to hide the sudden fear and bashfulness which have come upon her, and which defy her to govern them.

He places a chair for her, and seats himself a little distance off. There is something very kind and tender in his manner, a total absence of unfair curiosity, nothing but affectionate sympathy restrained by respect and sympathy.

She waits a moment, and then steadying

her voice, says, "When you asked me to be your wife, Colonel Swayne, I refused your offer, because I was in love with Mr. Huntley. Did you know that?"

"Miss Rogers, I hope you will not allow yourself to say a word that will give you pain. I asked you to be my wife because I loved you. What more can I say? I could take no side views of a nature so large and generous as yours. I felt that I had acted an intrusive part when you refused me, and I wrote my apology to you. I was proud to receive your letter this morning, for it showed that you had confidence in me. How can I help you?"

He says all this as if to avert, or at least to delay, a confession which he intuitively feels will pain him to hear and her to tell. He is too amiable to challenge the meaning of her letter, which, after all, was susceptible of two interpretations. But Fan need only lift her gaze to his face to know that

his love is unchanged. He is well-bred enough to suppress, just now, its manifestations in manner or speech ; but he cannot keep it out of his eyes, nor out of the subdued, half-wistful smile that softens his face.

She waits until he ceases, and then goes on, with her eyes fixed on the carpet.

“I am not afraid of your mistaking my meaning. I am only a girl, and cannot help feeling nervous. I wrote to you under an angry impulse, and felt frightened when the letter was gone ; but I have no fear now. I have not even thought over what I should say to you. I have my story to tell, and then you shall judge.”

He keeps quite still. The colour comes into her face and deepens.

“I rejected you because I loved Mr. Huntley. I mean to be very honest. I *did* love him, very dearly. I thought he was true to me, and quarrelled with mamma

for being rude to him, and denying him the house. I met him often in secret, and all the time I thought he loved me fondly." She swallows a sob, and proceeds: "Mamma disliked him so bitterly, that I was sure she would never sanction our marriage. I was leading a very wretched life—very wretched. Mr. Huntley asked me to elope . . . and I consented, and went to keep the appointment he himself made. He did not come to me. He had eloped with my cousin instead. I came home quite mad, and wrote that letter to you. It was pique, I dare say, that made me write; but I felt the want of a friend, too—some one to hold out a loving hand to me in my trouble. Oh, yes . . . I had my mother . . . but I believed that you loved me, and I liked to think of your love at that moment, and so I wrote."

She is foolish not to meet his eye, for she has really nothing to fear. But she is a

creature full of extraordinary impulses. She jumps from her chair and exclaims,—

“Now, Colonel Swayne, you will want to leave the house. You think me a bold and foolish girl, I dare say. I am here to answer for my actions . . . I am not ashamed—I—I—”

She stops, breaks down on a sudden, and bursts into tears. Both her hands cover her face: he presses her arm gently and seems as much affected by her tears as if he were the cause of them.

“You must forget this man’s bad treatment,” he says in the kindest tone of entreaty. “Does not his conduct show how very worthless he is?——”

“Oh!” she interrupts him, looking up with her eyes flashing with tears: “don’t think I am crying for him: I am crying for myself, to think that I owe all this to my own miserable blindness. I hate the man now. I thank God all is over between us.”

And she struggles to regain her composure, and seats herself with her cheeks burning and her eyelashes heavy with tears.

It is impossible to know whether he designedly misunderstands her or not, but he certainly says, standing before her with his hands clasped,—

“I am deeply grieved to hear of the annoyance this worthless person has caused you. I think that in the letter I wrote to you, I said that you could not confer a greater happiness upon me than by putting it in my power to serve you. Show me how you wish your wrongs redressed, Miss Rogers. I will undertake to obey your commands.”

“Why do you laugh at me?” she mutters with her scarlet face in hiding on her bosom. “Do you think I want you to shoot him?” and, I give you my honour, she actually smiles.

"You told me in your letter that you had made a mistake. What is that mistake? does it refer to your *liking*" (he can't bring out "loving") "for Mr. Huntley?"

"Yes, that is the mistake — a horrid, frightful mistake!" she cries passionately.

"And to nothing else?"

She makes no answer.

He waits some moments and says, "I think you owe me a little explanation," kindly but reproachfully.

"You must find out what I mean," she answers, biting her lip.

"I know what I should like you to mean," he exclaims quickly. "But my hopes were very heavily defeated some time since. I should be foolish to renew them."

"After my letter?" she says in a smothered voice.

He looks amazed, drops on a chair by her side and catches hold of her hand.

"Am I really to believe, Miss Rogers,

that — that — ” he stammers over the Grandisonian sentence he is about to deliver and bursts into a stroke of nature. “ I love you dearly, Fanny ; I never loved you more fondly than I do now, dearest. I was inexpressibly saddened by your rejection of me, for I had really hoped to win you. Will you marry me, Fanny ? My whole life shall be devoted to your happiness.”

“ Would you care to make me your wife after what I have told you ? ”

“ Yes, a thousand times yes.”

She is surprised into a deep admiration of him for his fidelity and forgiving love. She had never much thought of the issue of this meeting ; but she had been troubled with great secret misgivings that he would pity her and excuse her and leave her. He tries to draw her to him, but she holds off.

“ How can you trust me ? do not you know that yesterday I was in love with



Mr. Huntley, and was waiting for the evening to come to elope with him ? How do you know that I love you ? You have a good and noble nature ; think whether I deserve your love before you offer it to me."

He smiles at her fondly.

"Dearest, I trust you wholly. What has happened only endears you to me. I am sure that your heart is faithful and upright ; my happiness dates from this hour, dear, and cannot be concerned in the events of yesterday."

"I will be your wife," she says, and gives him her hand ; then lays her face against his shoulder and cries silently.

Mrs. Rogers, having hung over the banister until she has felt rather faint, has turned into her bedroom, and there sits waiting to hear the hall-door violently slammed ; being very fully persuaded that no sooner shall the Colonel hear what Fanny

has to tell him, than he will rush indignantly out of the house.

But the door is *not* slammed, and time passing, Mrs. Rogers comes to the conclusion that Fanny has thought better of her resolve, and is amusing the Colonel with some hoaxing excuse for the letter she sent him.

What excuse, other than the exact truth, Fanny could make, Mrs. Rogers does not consider. She is weak enough to hope that her daughter is silent upon the unfortunate affair of her love for Mr. Huntley. All the same she is very unpleasantly agitated. Will the Colonel propose? what are they doing? She ought to be there to see and hear. Fan is a great chatterbox and full of inconvenient impulses. Mrs. Rogers has a delusion that her presence restrains her, and from time to time she pops on to the landing and backs into her room again, feverish with impatience and curiosity.

A half-hour passes before she hears so much as a sound from below ; then a door opens : then a pair of feet come up the staircase, and Mrs. Rogers darts out on to the landing to meet Fanny coming thoughtfully and quietly upstairs.

The girl takes her mother's hand and goes into her bedroom with her. Her eyes are rather red and her smile is restless and constrained.

"I have promised to be his wife, mamma," she says. "I do not love him, but he knows that I like him very much, and by-and-by I am sure that I shall feel that everything has happened for the best."

"My dear child !" cries Mrs. Rogers, and throws her arms round her neck and hugs her tightly and of course begins to cry.

"I have not spared myself nor him either, poor fellow !" Fanny goes on. "I don't think there is a single thought or

action of mine since I first knew Mr. Huntley that I have not told him. He is very kind, mamma : he is very good, he is very gentle. I am sure I shall be happy with him," and she smiles wanly.

"Has he gone, my dear?" Mrs. Rogers sobs ; and when Fanny says, "No, he is waiting to see you," the poor lady goes with streaming eyes to the looking-glass and adjusts her cap, and says that she prays God her dear child will be happy : she oughtn't to be crying now, she feels, it's a poor welcome to good news ; but she can't help thinking of Ethel and the trouble her dear Fanny has endured : and she gives the girl another hug and takes her arm and they go downstairs together.

"You'll forgive me for crying," she exclaims walking hastily up to the Colonel. "I am very glad to see you. This is very unexpected and gratifying. My daughter

is very dear to me, Colonel Swayne, and I have lost my niece through the treachery of a bad young man !”

Dear candid creature ! all her thoughts come out, and she has as earnest a face upon her as if she were saying her prayers. The Colonel kisses her : yes, he salutes her cheek with a respectful smack, and Mrs. Rogers feels as honoured as if she had kissed hands at St. James’s.

“You mustn’t ask me to sympathize very deeply with you in your loss of your niece,” he says with a smile. “Just now I am too proud and happy to imagine that there can be any trouble left in the world.”

He crosses over to Fanny and takes her hand and smiles fondly on her.

“Well, Colonel Swayne,” exclaims Mrs. Rogers tearfully and shaking her dress as she seats herself, “I assure you that I could not wish to see my daughter’s happi-

ness entrusted to better keeping than yours. I shall feel very dull when she is gone and shall miss her dreadfully : but I shall always be certain that she's happy ; and Fanny will bear me out when I say that I was truly sorry to hear that she had refused you—truly sorry and indignant too : and all for a base worthless creature who—”

“Mamma,” interrupts Fanny, and the Colonel who has got hold of her hand feels her fingers stiffen a little : “there is no need ever to recur again to the past. So far as Colonel Swayne and I are concerned, it is dead—”

“Dead and buried, dearest,” says the Colonel.

“But he is a wicked fellow,” cries out Mrs. Rogers ; “and I must be allowed to say so. He is dead to us, I admit ; but Ethel is still my niece,—she was entrusted to me, Colonel Swayne, by my poor sister

who died when Ethel was a very little thing—and I can't hold my tongue when I think of her and the mischief her wicked lover has caused."

"I told you just now, mamma, that Colonel Swayne knows the whole story, my share in it, and yours and Ethel's. Is it a pleasant story that we need go over it again? I am to be Colonel Swayne's wife, and all these bitter memories must die, and I must atone by my love for the mistake I made in listening to a false-hearted man. God knows I have been punished severely enough." She bends her flushed face to the Colonel and whispers, "I will try and make you happy, George."

That "George" does not come quite so easily as "Jack" did; but it transports the Colonel. He is really and truly head over ears in love with her. And is not he right? It is not because he is an unsuspicious, gentle, amiable creature that he

can't see deeper than the surface of things? She has spoken to him openly and truthfully; told him her story not lackadaisically, but in a way that shows him she feels the indignity and cruelty of Jack's behaviour, not the loss of his love. Ought he to turn upon her and say, "No, my dear; when I wanted to marry you, you refused me; now a good-looking young rascal has jilted you and you call upon me to propose to you again. Thank you! I am not fond of battered hearts, of faded emotions, of decayed affections served up in a ragout to please what you may choose to call an old man's palate. If Jack Huntley had kept his appointment where should I have been? Figure me, if you please, where I should have been had Jack met you last night, and permit me to wish you a *bon jour*."

Should he have talked to her like this? Only an ass would mistake a girl so com-



pletely. Indeed her turning to him so immediately after yesterday's nauseous dose is a fine compliment. "I made a dreadful mistake," she says, or as good as says. "I thought I loved Jack sincerely and gave you up for him, though I should have married you had I not known Jack, because I love your character, your sweet amiability, your generous affectionate genial nature. But I find Jack is an impostor; and I turned to you at once because I felt that you still loved me, and would forgive me for not seeing your real goodness and the value of your love until Jack's villainy had opened my eyes to them. Above all, I am only a girl. Do not be so unmanly as to judge me by my mistakes."

I repeat, wouldn't a man be an ass to reject such an appeal from the impulsive, beautiful, open-hearted girl whom he loves? The Colonel knows better, and thanks her with his smiles and eyes, and is more vain

of having won her after the experience she has gone through than had he married her before Jack had been heard of.

Mrs. Rogers having dried her eyes and eased her mind, puts on a serene countenance and grows officiously hospitable—of course the Colonel will stop to dinner. Put him down to dry bread, and give Fan the cutting of the loaf, and I warrant he'll thank you for as sumptuous a repast as ever he remembered eating.

Mrs. Rogers pets him, and hangs about him, and talks to him of her dear husband, and relates stories of Fanny when she was a little child, and he must be the best good-natured man in the world not to wish her at Jericho forty times an hour.

And Fanny? Well, she is very quiet. She puts on a smile when the Colonel looks, and offers no interruption to her mother's flow of language. The die is

cast, her fate is sealed—there sits her husband. She is not sorry, she is not glad. She cannot talk, that's all. She would like to be alone, but will not leave the room lest the Colonel should mistake the motive of her absence.

Ah! it is all very well for her to declare that she hates Jack. She *does* hate him—but too bitterly, too passionately to prove that she hates him. Is this a paradox? Her hate ought to be moderate, dislike rather it should be called, largely qualified by contempt, and illuminated with the serene pleasure of having escaped marriage with a fellow who might have broken her heart in a year. This would be good honest aversion, showing a mind defecated of love, and remembering only of the past the things which render it odious.

She can't but think of him: she can't but follow him in fancy. She thinks of Ethel—*his wife!* They are married by

this time. They are very loving, be sure of it. How can he kiss this wife of his, remembering what he said to the girl he deceived? Can a thought occur to him that will not sting him as a reproach?

Mrs. Rogers goes on chatting eagerly, and Fansometimes wakes from her reveries and sends her large dark eyes travelling around as though amazed by the issue into which deception and impulse have forced her. But somehow, miserable as she is at heart, she never meets the Colonel's glance but that the kindly loving messages it conveys warm her with a transient sense of peace and rest. He is very good, she feels; she is sure there is no deed, no thought of his which she cannot honour; she will keep her promise to be happy with him, and will teach herself to thank God for the gift of his honest heart. But her thoughts *will* go to Jack, to the miscarried hope of last night, to the lonesome waiting, to her

miserable tears, to the love she felt for him, to the ache, and grief, and anguish which his desertion planted in her.

The Colonel stops to dinner of course, and spends the evening with his betrothed. Mrs. Rogers does not take long to realize the full value of this gentleman's love for her daughter, and swells with importance. How rich he is she can't conceive ; but she makes no doubt he is rolling in wealth. She says at table, when Charlotte whips off the dish-cover, and exposes a leg of mutton,—

“I will offer you no apologies, Colonel Swayne, for this humble fare; we are homely people, old-fashioned in our tastes, but that need not prevent me from assuring you that you are a most heartily welcome guest.” And she effusively smiles upon him, and flirts at him with her head, and looks unutterable thanks for his courteous rejoinder to her polite speech.

When in the drawing-room she so far forgets or stifles her sorrow and fears for Ethel, as positively to ask Fanny to sing the Colonel a song. And why shouldn't Fanny sing? Didn't poor Olivia Primrose raise her pathetic voice in some moving lines at the request of the poor old Vicar after her betrayal and desertion? But I don't think she knew when she sang, that the wretch whom she loved was going to marry rich and pretty Arabella Wilmot. Would she have warbled about lovely woman's stooping to folly had Arabella been Mrs. Thornhill? Not she! her voice would have choked in her throat. Fanny can't sing. She never had much of a voice: she has no voice at all now. The heartless fascinating Jack and his triumphant little devil of a wife move before her mind's eye and oppress her with bile and melancholy. She grows more depressed as the evening wears away, though she does what she

can to make the Colonel think she is happy.

She sits by his side, and lets him hold her hand and smiles dejectedly when he tells her how proud he is to have her for his Captain for good and all.

“My Captain, dearest,” he says, “to command me through our lives. I will change my yacht’s name, and call her after her owner, for she shall be your’s, Fanny, and you shall not have a wish unfulfilled, darling, that I can gratify. I have never known happiness before now. Indeed, dear, you have made me very happy.”

This is how a man should talk to the girl he is going to marry. But let him mean what he says, as the Colonel does. There is no mistaking *his* sincerity. His even tranquil pleasure is the true assurance of his real feelings; worth a million of passionate adjectives, of gushing embraces, and poetical allusions. He is a thorough

gentleman, with none of the chilliness, but with all the graces, of good breeding ; and Fan hates herself for only liking him, for not catching the contagion of his quiet happiness, for thinking with bitter, angry, mortifying regret of the handsome wretch who fooled her.





## CHAPTER IX.

### OLD-FASHIONED LOVE-MAKING.

**M**RS. ROGERS'S mind is greatly relieved next morning by a letter from Ethel. She dates from Baker Street, and says,—

“My darling Jack and I were married this morning, and my heart is so full of love and joy that I feel quite unworthy of the happiness that has descended upon me. Ah, dear auntie, 'tis not given to every one to be loved as I am. Most truly Moore wrote :—

“ ‘There’s a bliss beyond all that the minstrel hath told,  
When two that are linked in one heavenly tie,  
With hearts never changing and brows never cold,  
Love on through all ills and love on till they die.’

But I mustn’t bore you with my feelings, nor fill my letter with quotations, for Jack is waiting to take me to the South Kensington Museum. We shall remain at the above address for the present ; and will you, dear auntie, please send all my”— (and here she gives a page that reads like a haberdasher’s bill, and I warrant you is very exact and minute) — “I’ll pay the carriage. Don’t forget my boots, and a parcel of gloves you’ll find in the top right-hand drawer in my bedroom. Dear old bedroom ! how I remember it ! Dear Fanny may have my books ; and speaking of her, please give her the enclosed, which Jack desired me to send when I wrote ;” and she winds up with another stanza from Moore, and a P.S., in which she entreats

her aunt not to forget her boots and the parcel of gloves.

What does Jack send to Fanny? Why, the little cross she gave him. It is wrapped up in tissue paper, and lies flatly in the envelope, and so Mrs. Rogers would have missed seeing it but for the passage about it in the letter. On the tissue paper is written, "With thanks." The writing is Ethel's, disguised to look like a man's, and I suppose she meant a sneer by it.

Mrs. Rogers puts the cross down with a very surly face—she reads the letter in bed, for the postman calls before she rises—and seems to discover, quite on a sudden, that Ethel has acted with great audacity, cunning, and insolent heartlessness. Of course it is a great relief to her to feel that the girl is married; and this weight of doubt being lifted, perhaps gives scope for the operation of other emotions which have lain buried under it. She positively

grows tearful as she looks at the little cross, and thinks of the love and wrong the gift typifies. Sentiment never dies in a woman ; old romantic memories stir in Mrs. Rogers, and kindle a lively sympathy for Fan. Why, that cross was poor papa's gift ! Fan dearly prized the trinket ; she must have loved Mr. Huntley very honestly to give it him. Then mamma thinks of the poor stock of jewellery her child has to make presents from ; of her slender wardrobe, of the hearty cheerfulness with which she has always anticipated denial, and refused coveted things that mamma's narrow income may not suffer.

She puts the cross in the letter, and the letter in its envelope, and the envelope under her pillow. She'll not speak of it to Fan. Thank God, her dear girl has found a true heart to lean upon, after all. Let the past be dead, and this cross the memorial over its grave. Fan's wound will be

quite healed presently, and then she'll be glad to get papa's gift back again in her possession.

Fanny, in her own bedroom, is dressing herself with many a pause and lengthened fit of abstraction. She has heard the postman's 'knock, and wondered if that is a letter from Ethel. But she resolves not to ask. She makes up her mind never to be the first to speak of her cousin or Mr. Huntley again. She passed the greater part of last night in thinking over them, in trying to guess the true meaning and story of Jack's betrayal of her. But most truly it is a mystery to her, with no other glimmer of light shed upon it than comes from an intuitive conviction, that Ethel has acted treacherously. If Jack were in love with Ethel all along, what end had he to gain by disguising his passion and making love to Fanny? He might have married Ethel. He had no reason to suppose that

Mrs. Rogers would have opposed her niece's union with him. Surely he was sincerely in love with Fan, and she recalls his words and conduct, only to end her reverie by the staggering question, "Why did he leave me?"

Shall she go on speculating? shall she waste her heart over fruitless theories? The past is out of their reach; it is a distant memory now, tear-stained and melancholy enough, God knows; she had better not try to sound Jack's motives, lest her humiliation should be greater than it is.

Mrs. Rogers sticks to her resolution to say nothing to Fanny about Ethel's letter and its enclosure, and Fanny sticks to *her* resolution to ask no questions; so at breakfast they talk of anything else, and chiefly of the Colonel.

He is to call at eleven or thereabouts, and Fan battles hard with her low spirits, that she may greet him with a cheerful

welcome. It is a bright, glorious morning, with the lovely softness of immature autumn upon the trees and green land, and a sky of swimming blue. Fan was indoors all day yesterday, and pines for the fresh air and the enjoyment of exercise; so she takes an umbrella, and goes into the garden, amid the humming of the bees and the pale and lazy sunshine that whitens the old wall, and discloses close-lying treasures of peaches blushing in the soft embrace of leaves, and the garish trail of snails sliming the green brickwork behind the nailed branches.

Mrs. Rogers watches her slow steps with a sympathetic eye, and then goes upstairs to Ethel's bedroom, to pack the clothes that the girl has written for.

Ethel's wardrobe is no contemptible one, and Mrs. Rogers soon works herself into an advanced stage of perspiration over the dresses and linen, and odds and ends of

ribbons and collars and ties and pieces of tulle which her exploring hands bring to light.

After she has been some time thus engaged, she is called away by the announcement that Colonel Swayne is downstairs. She finds him in the drawing-room, turning over an album with a very cheerful face.

"Alone!" cries Mrs. Rogers with a little coquettish air of reproach. And the Colonel laughs and says—

"Not for long, I hope, Mrs. Rogers."

"Fanny is in the garden. Is she in sight?" And Mrs. Rogers looks through the window and goes on talking. "I am hard at work packing Ethel's things. I heard from her this morning. She is married. I have not breathed a syllable about her letter to Fanny. It's best to let bygones be bygones. He is a very poor, mean-spirited creature, is Mr. Huntley, and Ethel has behaved with unexpected cun-



ning and boldness. But it's all over. I'll send the child her things, and I can only hope that she'll be happy with her foolish choice—though I have my doubts.”

“Mr. Huntley deserves a horsewhipping for his behaviour,” says the Colonel. “But shall I quarrel with him, Mrs. Rogers? Doesn't he deserve my thanks? He has bequeathed me a great happiness. I fear that Fanny frets a little. She was low-spirited last evening, wasn't she? But what can be more natural? She is full of noble feelings and generous impulses, and necessarily is pained by the slight the empty-headed fop has shown her—suffers in her pride as every genuine nature would, and in her heart, too, for she must have loved the fellow to undertake so serious an adventure as an elopement with him.”

“Oh, don't speak of her love, Colonel Swayne!” cries Mrs. Rogers, holding up

her hands. "She is heartily ashamed of it. I think it is shame that depresses her. Her pride no doubt has been wounded, and surely the *amour-propre* of an archangel would be stung by the insult of a miserable creature like that Mr. Huntley. But it's dead and gone. We must forgive and forget. She is still very young, and every woman," she adds, with a wise smile and drawing herself erect, "is privileged to commit one or two little follies in the course of her life, just to keep her womanly, you know, Colonel, and save her from the intolerable self-complacency which is always—well, very often the characteristic of unimpeachable ladies."

The Colonel laughs and then says gravely,—

"They say that a lover ought to show jealousy in order to prove his love. Even had I the power I don't think I should have the will to exhibit my sincerity by

any such manifestation of feeling. My confidence in Fanny is absolute. Has she a quality that does not illustrate a wonderful loyalty of heart? She who can be so true to herself as Fanny is will be true to others. She makes me a proud man by consenting to be my wife. I could wish, not for my sake, but for hers, that she had been spared the disagreeable experience she has had to endure. But I should be acting an unworthy part if I associated her depression with anything but the just indignation of a generous nature at a mean and pitiful and dishonourable slight. She does not love me yet," he says smiling, "but I shall try very hard to win her love. My real courtship will begin after marriage, and God grant that I may so deal by her that she may know, with all her heart, how very true is my love for her."

Poor Mrs. Rogers can hardly restrain herself from embracing him. He walks to

the window and says timidly, "Would Fanny wish me to join her?"

"Most certainly—yes!" cries Mrs. Rogers with tearful emphasis, and the Colonel takes his hat, and makes her a little bow and goes into the garden.

The old pastoral poets evidently thought playing at bo-peep with one's sweetheart a pretty pleasure: all through their verses Alexis is dodging Chloe behind a tree, and Strephon is chasing Delia across the flowery mead.

The Colonel probably sympathizes with these poetical sports as he walks down the garden looking right and left for his mistress. There is no doubt he didn't want Mrs. Rogers to show him the road, by the eager way in which he left the room.

He has to walk the whole length of the garden, however, before he meets Fanny, and then he sees her seated on the top bar of the old gate, which ought to break down under

her weight, thoughtfully swinging herself to and fro by means of her umbrella. Her back is towards him. What a fine picture she makes with the sunlight trembling through the branches on the right of her, on her hair!

Beyond is the field, on either side the hedge: this throws her grand figure into relief; the heels of her boots are hooked on to a lower bar, and the Colonel contemplates with privileged eyes a foot and ankle of amazingly smart and delightful proportions.

Can he help loving her? She might have been on the verge of eloping a score of times, and still the Colonel would think her adorable, and found his pride and happiness on winning her.

Either he treads lightly or she is too busy with her thoughts to hear him. If he were a young lover the chances are he would put his hands over her eyes and kiss her

and whisper, "Who am I?" Cheap courtship. Instead, he behaves like an honest practical lover, such as women respect, such as I wish them all possessed of: *he takes a little morocco case out of his pocket*, and slips it into her hand and holds her fingers locked upon it.

"Oh!" she cries, "who's that?" and turns swiftly; and when she sees him a glorious blush dyes her face, and she bounds off the gate, and bows with elegant embarrassment and says, "Good-morning. How softly you walk! What is this, Colonel Swayne?" and she looks at the morocco case.

"Open it, dearest."

She does so, and takes out a diamond ring: the splendid gem flashes like her dark eye.

"Is this for me?"

"For whom else?"

"Then put it on my finger."

Her teeth shine through her smiling lips

as he holds her hand, and fits the ring on, and when it is on he kisses her hand, and leads her through the gate.

"I am very much obliged to you for this beautiful present," she says, looking at the ring, and heartily admiring it, and proud to possess it.

"What will make you quite happy, dearest?" he asks, watching her earnestly. "Nothing that money can purchase—I should not wish that. What sincere action, what proof of love would make you happy? You were depressed last night——"

She interrupts him passionately—

"I cannot help my low spirits . . I have been cruelly wronged and deceived . . and I *must* have time given me to forget the past. Don't doubt that I am happy to have won your love—indeed I am," she says, softening her voice into a note of pathetic sweetness, and laying her hand on his arm. "I know what you deserve, and

. . . you *must* give me time to forget the past," she adds, breaking down suddenly.

"Do not ask me to give you time, Fanny—take time, dear. I will leave you if you wish, and you can think over my offer, and if the acceptance of it causes you the least regret, write me your thoughts, dearest, and rest assured that you shall be as free as you were before I knew you."

"Why do you talk like that?" she asks, concealing a little fear with a pout. "Am not I willing to marry you? Do not I know that you love me, and have not I promised to love you dearly, George, if you will give me a little, just a *little* time?"

"My wish is that you should be happy, Fanny," he answers gently and quietly. "If my leaving you will make you happy I will go. I wish to live for you, and act only for your sake! Darling!" he exclaims with wonderful tenderness, "believe me that I



love you deeply—so deeply that I will make *any* sacrifice to prove myself.”

She bends forward, and kisses him on the forehead.

“Does that please you?” she whispers, and her face glows as she averts it. He presses her hand tightly, and before they have left the crazy old gate a dozen yards astern he has got her to NAME THE DAY.



## CHAPTER X.

### BEGINNING OF THE END.

**AND** how is this story going to end ?  
With Fan's marriage? How else ?

And since it *is* to take place, the sooner we get over it the better : for this reason—the Colonel is a middle-aged man. Do you take the sarcasm ? One can watch a young fellow spooning with a girl, and, providing his behaviour is at once fervent and discreet, one's gravity may remain unmoved. But a middle-aged man !

Well, it is not because we think he ought

to know better that we grin; a middle-aged man has, in the opinion of the best judges, a better right to make love than a young fellow whose mind is bound to be flighty, and who is quite incapable of correctly choosing. But somehow we can't discover anything particularly interesting in a middle-aged man's love. He must never be profane or we are shocked; he must never be passionate or we are disgusted; he must weigh his words, express his emotions sensibly and calmly—in short he must make love as they did in his father's time if he wants to preserve our respect, and what wins our respect destroys our interest, generally.

To be plain, there is really nothing in the Colonel's love-making to detain us. He is very sincere, very courteous, very gentle—that's all. His gifts are splendid, but why catalogue them, since we are never likely to see nor possess them? One cannot robe

a marriage of this kind in poetry. It's just a plain wedding, which people would call sensible on both sides. They are married in Havenstown without fuss and with scarce two dozen people to look on ; and it's not until the next day that people say to each other, "*Who* do you think was married yesterday?" and then they look for the announcement in the *Times*, and are rather flattered to see the name of their town mentioned in that powerful organ.

But what *does* concern this story is the state of Fanny's mind at this period ; and I am obliged to own that it is not satisfactory. Outwardly she is all the Colonel can desire, —she meets him with smiles, she kisses him for his gifts, she tells mamma that she is quite happy, and goes to the church with a composed face, and leaves Havenstown with a few natural tears on parting with her mother, but with nothing in her

behaviour to cause poor gentle-hearted Colonel Swayne the smallest misgiving.

But she can't forget Jack. She can't forget that she loved him. And she is very, very much afraid that she will never be able to love anybody again in this world.

Over and over she has told the Colonel before their marriage that she hates the man, and her dark glittering eyes emphasize the assertion and send conviction home with it.

But she doesn't hate him—she tries to do so—whatever she can recall from the past to make her resentment bitter, she keeps permanently before her, but to no purpose. Heartless and cruel as he proved himself she regrets him, she treasures up her memory of him, she can only think of him as a man who acted unkindly to her.

Her real hate is for Ethel. Never from the moment when she missed her ring has she had the least doubt that Jack's deser-

tion of her was owing to some inexplicable piece of wickedness on the part of Ethel.

Scarcely has her pride, at times, restrained her from writing to Jack and commanding him to explain his strange, incredible behaviour to her, so bitter and mad has her curiosity to fathom the mystery of his faithlessness been.

But to no living creature does she breathe the thoughts which possess her. Mrs. Rogers repeatedly tells the Colonel, with a chuckle, that she was quite sure dear Fan would soon forget that wretched piece of folly, and with that belief the Colonel marries her and takes her away, and Fan battles valiantly with her heart to do her duty to the faithful simple love of her kind good husband, tormented the while by memory, which breaks out fiercely during the honeymoon when she is alone for a while and can put down her mask and turn

her true face towards the past where her real love lies bleeding.

No apology can be made for her. Perhaps she ought not to have married the Colonel. Perhaps she was betraying a faithful nature by offering him a sham love and pretending to be happy. But that is saying too much. To begin with, the Colonel married her very well knowing that she didn't love him—she never disguised this truth. How she really felt towards him he knew.

She liked him very much, she heartily respected him, and on these foundations he hoped to build the emotion that was wanting when he married her. She was honest to him so far as her regard for him went. And she was honest to him so far as her lingering love for Jack went.

No faintest flavour of dishonesty towards her husband tainted the bitter memory that lived in her, and took her back to the days

when Jack was her darling. It was a memory that defied her to quell, and she longed for the time to come when strength should be given her to repress and extinguish it. But whilst it existed it must trouble and sadden her thoughts; it must, perhaps, keep her shortsighted to many lovable qualities in the man she has married; but it cannot do more harm I think than this, because it has to deal with a genuine nature, the very bewailment of whose infirmity is good testimony to its capacity of justness and purity.

They travel in Scotland and Ireland for the honeymoon. The Colonel is the most liberal creature in life, begrudges his wife nothing, and by-and-by takes her to London to pass the winter in a fine furnished house, hard by Belgrave Square.

Do you conceive that Mrs. Colonel Swayne's sentimental memories remain as poignant as they threatened? Drop by



drop the contents of the cup that overflowed leak away. She goes to theatres, to picture shows, to wild beast shows, she drives about in a carriage and pair, she sees life, and men, and women, and Jack partially fades off her mind, just as you may have seen a photograph fade, leaving nothing visible but an eye, the parting of the hair, a fragment of shirt-collar. He fades because her mind is occupied.

She is full of the business of pleasure. She has very little time to think of him—but sometimes he is recalled, at odd times, at a dinner-party, during a drive, and occasionally when the Colonel is most loving—yes, when the Colonel is most loving—then sometimes she thinks of Jack. Then the colours which have faded grow transiently beautiful and brilliant. The handsome wretch looks sorrowfully out of the past upon her, and says all manner of fanciful impossible things to her, with his

agreeable eyes. And whilst the Colonel caresses her and purrs about her, like the happy good-natured creature that he is, Fan's soul is leaning towards the phantom, and she is recalling the love-making on the Havenstown sands, and a passionate voice delivers a truth that is odious to her honourable heart to hear—that Jack was her only darling, and ought to be her darling now.

And this goes on whilst the Colonel fondly smooths her hair and whispers charming compliments. But these visitations of memory grow gradually fewer and farther between. By the ensuing summer Jack is only a small sentimental memory, but it must be owned that Captain Fanny has not yet learned to love her Colonel.

In the July, then, of this summer, the Colonel orders his yacht, which is re-christened "Fanny," to be brought round

from the port where she has lain during the winter, and sets sail with his wife from Gravesend, expressly that Fan may see what charming scenery the Thames offers below bridges. He means to take her for a cruise right away down Channel as far as Penzance, putting in and stopping for some days at every principal port on the way down, and when Penzance is reached he proposes to down with his helm and stand for the French shore and skirt that, as he skirts the English side.

One of the first places they are to stop at is Havenstown, where Fan will visit her mamma and ask her to accompany them. The trip makes a glorious programme to any one fond of the sea, and the Colonel has never yet seen Fanny in such good spirits as those which possess her for a whole week before they start.

They have very brilliant and beautiful weather all the way down the river, and at

about half-past four in the afternoon the yacht is off the Reculvers.

As the sea opens the wind hauls round to the westward, and Stead, who is in command, advises the Colonel to go to leeward of the Goodwin Sands and fetch Haventown from the South Sand Head.

What is the result? At six o'clock it comes on to blow freshly, reefs are taken in, and the yacht spins along with the Goodwin Sands making an ugly and sinister horizon of foam on the starboard beam.

The yacht heads straight for the French coast, and honestly does her ten knots an hour. Fan, who is never sea-sick, immensely enjoys the triumphant progress of the swift vessel. The Colonel has taken care to wrap her up in waterproofs, so she can laugh at the clouds of foam which, from time to time, rise like clouds of smoke over the yacht's bows, and souse the decks and

make them shine under the red and angry sunset.

The wind increases to a gale. They stow the foresail and close-reef the main-sail, and Stead says, "It looks dirty, sir. There's more behind : we had better get out of it as soon as we can."

"Can we fetch Havenstown?"

"It'll take us all our time. Best thing we can do, sir, is to make Boolong. There won't be so much sea on t'other side, and we'll run the distance if the wind keeps steady in three hours."

"Very well," says the Colonel, and he tells his wife that they are going to put into Boulogne for the night.

It is quite dark when they sight the Cape Grinez light. A heavy sea is running, and a crescent moon swimming through the volumes of clouds which pour over her, sheds at times a wild troubled light on the leaping waters. Big ships

loom up and pass away like phantoms. They overhaul a Calais smack with the sea washing over her decks. The lights on the English coast have long since vanished, but Calais twinkles in a haze on their left, and the men on the look-out forward watch for the Boulogne lights to open.

The wind forces them to the eastward of their course, and at nine o'clock they go about, hoping to make Boulogne by the next board. Then Fanny, who has kept up her courage, begins to feel frightened. The yacht on this tack plunges heavily. Stead has to keep her full that she may preserve way enough upon her to rise drily to the seas which boil in her path. The full force of the wind is upon her, and she lies so sharply over, that when a broadside wave catches her and flings her to leeward, the water tumbles over her starboard side and envelops the decks in sheets of liquid fire.

Will they be drowned ? Fanny thinks, and sits shuddering in the mass of clothing the Colonel has heaped about her, and casts her dark eyes brilliant with fear upon the roaring seas, and holds her breath from time to time to prevent herself from shrieking out when the yacht makes one of her frightful, headlong, downward plunges.

The Colonel asks her to go below, but she refuses. It is a trying time for him, and the having the girl he devotedly loves on board is a quite independent tax on his moral forces. But he remains wonderfully cool and quiet; he holds his wife's hand and works like a man to keep her courage up.

"There is no danger," he tells her. "I have been out in heavier seas than this in a smaller boat. This yacht would outlive a dozen such gales. Cheer up, my pet !" and she shrinks close to his side and appreciates him as a real support, and admires

and thanks him for his reassuring words and the hearty spirited reception he gives to the tempest that would make her sick with fright were she without him to cling to and believe in.

It is eleven o'clock when the Boulogne lights are close. They have forged the yacht well to windward so as to make a fair wind for the harbour, the entry into which in a heavy sea is a ticklish job. The yacht's head yaws wildly ; both lights are at one moment on the port bow, then on the starboard bow ; the sea swings the vessel like a pendulum, and Stead has to set his teeth and grip the tiller with hands of iron to save her from rushing headlong on to the sands outside either pier.

Some men came aft ready to lower the mainsail.

It is the work of a moment ; a mighty sea foams savagely under the yacht's counter and impels her madly forward ; a



huge black outline leaps out against the sky on the right ; Stead and the fellow who helps him at the tiller port, and Fan feels the Colonel's hand tremble ; then comes a wonderful lull ; the sea is stilled as if by magic ; the dark skeleton piles of the piers twinkle by on either hand, and in a moment the yacht is in smooth water with the hooting and roaring of the ocean a long way astern.

“Well done, Stead !” the Colonel calls out, and is going to rise to stretch himself ; but Fan holds to him tightly and sobs out,—

“Thank God we are safe, George ! I should have died with the fear but for you !”

And this is just the beginning of her love for him : but it must be owned that it took a gale of wind to soften her.



## CHAPTER XI.

### HOW IT ENDS.


**N**EXT morning is gloriously fine. A breeze is blowing from the south, but the sky is a delicious blue and the sea a gay panorama of moving brilliant colours.

Fanny comes on deck before breakfast, in no way the worse for the rough usage of last night's gale. A long sound sleep has dismissed her from the luxurious cabin she occupies with a charming colour in her cheeks, and the little *douanier* looking down

upon the yacht from the side of the port, admits to himself as he curls his fierce mustache, that madame is perfectly pretty.

She can't see much of the town from the yacht's deck ; but the line of harbour, and the queer-looking piers, and the clumsy black smacks rowing heavily out to sea, and the smart steamers with their white and black funnels, and the sluice-dam yonder with the silver Liane beyond, and the red roofs of old-fashioned Capeure all make a bright picture, full of colour and quaintness, which Fan stares at with interest.

After breakfast she and the Colonel go ashore. She is in a very affectionate humour, and playful as good spirits should make a girl. "What shall we do with ourselves?" the Colonel asks her ; and she answers, "We will stop on shore all day, if you please. We were nearly drowned



last night, and I shan't recover my nerves until I have been on dry land a good twelve hours."

So her amiable husband, with his fond eyes upon her and his hand itching to catch hold of hers, prepares a little programme. They will drive; they will see what is to be seen at Boulogne-sur-Mer; they will visit Napoleon's Pillar, topped by the cocked-hatted little figure that contemptuously turns its back on Albion; they will explore the pepper-box cathedral and its gloomy crypt, relieved here and there by illuminated pictures of Calvary, the Ascension, &c.; they will view the ancient ramparts, with English cannon-balls embedded firmly in their venerable bricks; and then they will dine at the Hôtel——, where they are sure to get a good dinner and respectable wines; and if there is anything going on at the Etablissement they will look in, or drive round to the little theatre

and hear a French troupe in the *Traviata*.

Fan enjoys the day thoroughly. The drive is delightful. Nothing is stale to this charming creature with plain tastes and a handsome face; she chats gaily to her husband, and recalls old times at Havenstown, and says that to-morrow they will go across the Channel again; she must kiss her old mammy; and this winter George must positively take her to Paris, and she wants to see Rome before she gets too old to travel; and the Colonel laughs, and declares she shall go where she wants; and Fan laughs, and says that George is a dear good boy; and Monsieur Cocher cracks his whip and hisses, and shrieks out, "Hé, la bas!" and the result of the drive is, Fan gets to the hotel with a first-rate appetite.

It is a little after eight when they walk to the port. Heaps of people are out. A good band plays on a platform pretty nearly

opposite the spot where the yacht lies. The fishwomen, with their red petticoats and naked legs, and immense caps, look uncommonly picturesque. Little soldiers relieve the black coats with dots of colour. Carriages drive to and fro; a pale moon hangs over the cathedral, and beyond the Capecure pier the sky is flaming with a magnificent sunset.

"I quite forgot that I must write and post a letter to-night to —— . Will you come on board, dear?" says the Colonel.

"I can stop here until you return. You'll not be long, will you?"

"Perhaps a quarter of an hour. Where will you sit that I may find you?"

"On that bench there. I can hear the band and watch the people."


He walks with her to the bench, and leaves her.

Two or three minutes pass. They are playing one of Strauss's delightful waltzes.

Fan's foot keeps time to the floating measures, and her fine eyes rove about with an amused expression in them. There are many handsome toilettes : a number of French ladies, with fine taste in their dress ; a number of English ladies, some dowdyish, some tolerable, one or two graceful in their costumes, but every one of them, in lips, eyes, teeth, and complexion, worth a million of the sallow-faced, slightly-mustachioed Gallican belles.

Fan is a good deal stared at ; perhaps because she is alone. She wears her yacht-dress, her figure might be Hebe's ; and men promenading behind the bench she occupies, stop to admire her lovely proportions.

She is engrossed in contemplating a very fashionably-attired lady, hanging on to the elbow of a little man dressed with exaggerated accuracy, when she becomes sensible of the presence of some one standing near



her and looking at her. She is sensible for some moments of this person's presence before she attends to it, and then looks around, and sees,—

JACK HUNTLEY !

For an instant or two she does not believe her eyes—she thinks she is mistaken; the colour rises to her face, she leaves her seat hastily, and stands motionless, not knowing what to say or do.

“I thought I could not be deceived,” he says, raising his hat. “How do you do, Mrs. Swayne?”

She bows icily, but her heart beats faintly, intolerable emotions rush over her, and her one thought is, she would have given five years of her life not to have met him.

“Won't you shake hands?” he says.

“Oh, certainly,” she answers ; and gives him a lifeless hand, and hastily withdraws it, almost before he has time to touch it.



"I saw the announcement of your marriage in the *Times*," he goes on, with a slight smile and no hint of embarrassment, though with a touch of constraint in his manner. "I was very nearly writing my congratulations! but then you didn't congratulate me, did you? and one good turn deserves another."

"What is your object in speaking to me?" she says.

"We are old friends, aren't we?"

She looks at him with bitter scorn, bows, and is going away; but he stops her.

"Mrs. Swayne, don't let me drive you away. We ought to have something to talk about. Can't we be friends? I forgave you long ago."

"*You* forgave *ME* long ago?" she exclaims, with slow deliberateness and with wonderful intensity in her tone, sweeping round upon him as she speaks. "What do you mean?"

He looks at her with surprise, and seems incapable of answering.

"What do you mean?" she repeats, knitting her eyebrows so that a shadow appears thrown on her face.

"Is it possible you forget that we were once engaged to each other?" he says to her, without the least temper, with almost an air of pleasantry, indeed, but with an expression of lively curiosity in the gaze he fastens on her.

"How dare you recall that? how *dare* you?" she replies, speaking in a low, breathless voice.

"Ah, how dare I?" he exclaims, with a light laugh. "I don't suppose I could if I felt now what you made me feel then; but time works wonders, Mrs. Swayne. We were never destined for each other, after all; and I hope that Fate, by this time, has shown you that it knows better than mortals what is good for them."

He glances round, evidently searching for some one he expects, then looks in the light, nonchalant manner he has assumed from the beginning of the interview at Fanny.

"I am waiting for my husband," she says. "I must ask you to leave me in possession of this spot. If I move from it he will miss me."

"Why can't we be friends? Ethel is here—I am waiting for her, and my father is here too, thanks to my clever little wife, and I shall be happy to introduce him to you. Besides, would not you like to see Ethel? I am sure she would be glad to meet you."

His ease is insolence to her, and she is dumbfounded by it.

"Mr. Huntley, I must beg you to leave me, or I shall go."

"It would not be the first time you have left me," he answers, not offering to stir.

"You speak a falsehood," she answers, and bites her under-lip furiously.

"Good God !" he cries, abruptly, "did not you write to tell me you would not marry me?"

"No."

"No !!" his breath goes, his eyes open, he is utterly staggered. "You sent me back the ring I gave you in proof that our engagement was ended."

"When?"

"When?" he cries, scornfully; "what a queer memory you have!"

"I ask you, when?"

"On the day you agreed to meet me."

"I kept my appointment," she says, quite quietly. "I waited three quarters of an hour, and then went to your lodgings, and found you had left Havenstown with my cousin."

"Do you mean this?"

She turns away from him without answer.

"Ethel brought me a letter from you enclosing the ring," he says, speaking very quickly. "You said in that letter that you had mistaken your feelings, you found you did not love me nearly well enough to leave your home for me; you felt that you ought to yield to your 'mammy's' wishes respecting Colonel Swayne, and sent the ring as a proof that the farce was over. Pish!" he exclaims, controlling his manner, "it's not worth being angry over. As things are I am well content: I hope you are."

And he smiles and looks around him.

"Did you believe that I wrote that letter?"

"You did write it."

"I did not."

"Who then?"

"Your wife, Ethel. She stole that ring

out of my purse, and forged my handwriting, and won you with a lie. I wish you joy of your bargain."

He stares at her aghast, but there is something in the wonderful scorn with which she looks at him that brings the blood to his face.

He mutters aloud: "I see through her tricks! the sly little puss! But it was all for love, I suppose . . . . Oh, Mrs. Swayne, I am very sorry to have misjudged you."

"Will you leave me, please?"

"I really and truly believed that the letter Ethel brought me was from you. You see I did not know your handwriting. And then the ring! *that* made me so very sure. And remember who the bearer was; a sweetly pretty girl; her worst enemy must admit that. I was half in love with her when I was wholly in love with you, and she came to take your place, and . . . and . . . well, I'll not impeach her. She

is a good wife. She is very loving and sweetly pretty, you'll admit that, Mrs. Swayne. She has made my fortune, for I give you my word she has set my father doting on her . . . . Oh! there they are!"

He raises his hat, and walks swiftly away.

An old man comes hobbling along on the arm of what Jack truly calls a sweetly pretty girl. The old man is thin-legged, thin-faced, dusty-looking. The girl is dressed with exquisite taste. Her golden hair shines under her dainty hat, her long pale blue silk skirt trails along the dust.

She stops on a sudden: lets go the old man's arm, and turns swiftly to the right-about. Her eyes and Fan's have met, and the cowed, terrified little creature sneaks hastily off followed by Jack, leaving the old man staring after her with looks of mingled surprise and passion.

All this is the work of a moment. The

band strikes up an overture ; the shifting crowd blots out the three figures as though they were the merest shadows in a dream.

But Fan stands staring in the direction they have taken ; her nostrils are dilated, her cheeks are white, her eyes are glowing. Then comes a change over her : she takes a deep sobbing breath and turns, just as the Colonel lays his hand on her arm.

"Oh, George!" she cries, and clings to him.

"My darling, what is it?" he exclaims. "What is the matter? What has happened?"

"Take me on board the yacht," she whispers. "I want to be alone with you. . . . I have received a shock."

He asks no more questions, but places her arm tenderly in his, and they walk towards the yacht.

"Can we leave this place to-night, George?" she asks, in her strange sobbing voice.



"Yes, my darling, if you wish it," he answers, pressing her arm soothingly.

"Oh, George . . . I have just met Mr. Huntley . . . I will tell you the story presently . . . I have learnt my lesson. . . . I did not know how dear you were to me, George. Oh, husband, thank God, thank God that things are as they are!"

She bows her head, crying bitterly, but without sound. He presses her hand, and in silence they walk towards the yacht. The sun goes down at sea, and the moon in all her glory shines sweetly and calmly over the heaped-up roofs of the old town of Boulogne.

THE END.

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